

A SPIRITUAL
RETREAT
FOR
ONE DAY
IN
EVERY MONTH.

By a Priest of the Society of Jesus

Translated out of French,

by Surin

In the Year 1698

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THE PREFACE.

THE design of publishing this Book is to furnish all sorts of Christians with an easy method of Retreat; especially such whose business will not afford them leisure for an Annual Retreat of eight or ten Days together.

It is hoped that the facility of making these Retreats will render them more usual; and therefore for the help of those who (being wholly strangers to these pious Exercises) stand in need of more particular directions, you will find some Chapters in the beginning of the Book and before the Meditations, of
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P R E F A C E.

the necessity of Retreat, and of the methods of doing it well.

The Body and principal part of the Book consists of meditations on the great Truths of our Holy Religion; In which I have endeavour'd to choose the most proper subjects, and to put them in such an order and treat them so at large, as may render them most capable of making a due impression on those who attentively and seriously consider them. And because our design in these Retreats ought to be to prepare our selves by a true change of Life for an happy Death, I have repeated the Meditation of Death every month, and have added a new exercise of

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Preparation for it : which may be very useful if we put it in practise with such dispositions as it requires : And to render it more easy I have been very particular in specifying the Sentiments we ought to entertain, and in inserting the most suitable Prayers to inspire those Sentiments.

The last Part contains *Christian Reflections* upon different subjects, to supply the place of those Considerations which are proposed in other Books of Spiritual Retreat, for private Reading and entertainment. In the number & variety of which Reflections every Reader will find some thing profitable, according to his state and disposition.



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JOANNES INGLETON.

THOMAS WITHAM.

FIDEM facio testimonium hoc cui subscripserant Magistri Joannes Ingleton & Thomas Witham ejus esse authoritatis, ut ei facile credatur, & secure; ambo sunt Angli, in Facultate Parisiensi Doctores, Pii & eruditi, quorum Chirographum hic appositum probe novi. Die Augusti prima 1700.

PIROT.

A
SPIRITUAL RETREAT
FOR ONE DAY
IN
THE MONTH.

CHAP. I.
Of spiritual Retreat.

OF all pious Exercises there is none more proper to convert a soul then a *spiritual Retreat*: And it is perhaps the onely one that is never unprofitable. When every thing contributes either to pervert or distract us it is not at all strange that the most awakening Doctrines of our Religion make but a light impression: But when we retire our selves from the noise and disturbance of the world, when we set our selves to meditate at leisure on those great Truths which we had never seriously enough considered, & which appear to us then in another manner, when

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our application enables us to penetrate the true sence of them, and every thing helps to discover all their consequences, it is almost impossible for us not to be affected with them: Especially since this is a Time wherein grace flows more abundantly, and wherein our hearts are best dispos'd to receive it.

The experience of the miraculous conversion of so many hardned sinners, of the establishment and Reformation of so many Religious Houses; of so many lukewarm Christians recoverd from their tepidity and become in a few Days fervent servants of God; is a sensible Demonstration of the benefit wee may reap by considering in order and in solitude the great Truths of the Gospel.

S. Xaverius, S. Charles Borromeus, S. Francis de Sales, and almost all the saints of these latter ages, have acknowledg'd that they owe their conversion and their progress in holiness to these spiritual Exercises. And'tis in imitation of these Examples that they who apply

themselves seriously to work out their salvation, and all well regulated Community's, put themselves under an indispensable obligation to consecrate yearly at least eight or ten Days to the same Exercises.

Let us not flatter our selves, tis very hard to keep our affections pure in the midst of a world where every thing conspires to defile them; We shall find it very difficult to live long among so much corruption and not be some way tainted with it. Time slackens the greatest fervor, and the most heroick virtue stands in need of frequent supply's of strength: To which end it is absolutely necessary to retire our selves from time to time, and if we would breath a purer air we must seek it in solitude.

As too much worldly conversation alway's distracts, abates our fervour, and makes all our virtues languishing and weak: so it is only by recollection and retreat that we can recover our selves and regain new fervour.

The Holy Ghost descended visi-

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bly, only in the Defart, and when
the Apostles were in Retreat, & S.
Bernard declares that he could never
hear the voice of God while he
was taken up with worldly business;
but as soon as he came to himselfe
he retir'd into solitude to converse
at leisure with his Divine Master,
and to say with confidence, speak
now my God for thy servant heareth,
speak for Jam ready to obey thy will.

Quamdiu
in exteriori-
bus occupa-
tus fui, vo-
cem tuam
audire non
potui nunc
autem rever-
sus ad me in-
gressus sum
ad te ut pos-
sim ad te au-
dire & tibi
loqui. Lo-
quere ergo
misericordi-
sime quia au-
dit servus
tuus; loque-
re quia para-
tus sum au-
dire.

S. Bern. de
inter. dom.
cap. 66.

Can any man reasonably refuse to
practise what is so much for his
advantage, and what he stands so
much in need of? Yet many who
are convine'd of the necessity of Re-
treat, pretend that they have not time
for it; and this is the common
excuse of those who neglect it. But
Good God! will this excuse be re-
ceived? Our business takes up all
our time, is not the care of our sal-
vation a business? Can any thing in
the world be of so great importance
to us or concern us so nearly?
Alas! we have indeed no other bu-
siness but this; we were sent into
the world onely for this End; God

RETREAT. 5
has judg'd our whole Lives little
enough for this great work, and
can we pretend that we are not able
to spare eight or ten days in a year
for it.

A Fit of sickness makes us quit all
our business to look after our health;
we think our selves bound to lay a-
side all affaires for whole Months to-
gether, rather then neglect a suit at
Law, or hazard the loss of an Esta-
te, or expose a Friend or Relation
to ruine who depends wholly upon
our care & diligence: Are we not as
much concern'd to recover out of
a state of sin as to be cur'd of a distem-
per? Is not Heaven worth more
then an Estate? And what greater
misery can we fall into then to be
visibly in danger of damnation.

But we hope to make use of the
first leisure our business will allow
us, to think of our salvation; A las!
if we don't resolve to find leisure for
it, our business will never allow us
any: Let us be not less indifferent for
salvation, let us but look upon this
as a real business, and we shall very
easily find eight or ten days to employ

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only in it , in this business of Eternity.

'Tis very surprizing that the most innocent souls who have the least need of Retreat , never think themselves safe without it ; The most Apostolical men who live in the world only to sanctify it , are yet in continual fear of being corrupted by it : Those holy souls who never loose the presence of God are yet sensible of distractions even in the most fervent Exercises of their zeal : The most Heroick Christians interrupt their labours from time to time , to recollect themselves in solitude, and think it the only preservative, against the corruptions of the world , and the most certain means to obtain new strength.

Even the most exact Religious whose whole Life is a continual Retreat , do not find themselves enough retired : And yet men of a very slender virtue in comparison of them , who are every moment expos'd to the greatest dangers , who live in a constant dissipation of mind , in the midst of a world which they

RETREAT. 7
themselves own to be extremely wicked , and in which they confess it is very hard to be saved ; Can such men as these imagine that a Retreat of eight or ten days is not fit for them ? can they deceive themselves with the false excuse of want of time ? when they are even weary of idleness ; when they dont know how to employ themselves ; when the greatest part of their Lives is spent in vain amusements and diversions. Can such want time. Certainly if they would confess the truth they must own that they want not time , but will.

Our Saviours Parable of the high way where the seed of the word of God is trodden down and carried away by the Birds of the Ayr , is a just description of these busy men , allways taken up with the affaires of the world : Now since we cannot be saved if we do not make a right use of the Grace of God , since this heavenly seed cannot spring up in an heart expos'd to noise and tumult , It is evident that we are under a kind of necessity either to retire ourselves sometimes from the world

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or to renounce all hopes of being saved.

But some object, what will people say if they see me go into a Retreat, to think only on Eternity? How shall I be ridicul'd and laugh'd at? Good God! How long shall such idle apprehensions stifle the most noble sentiments, make men reject the grace of God, and abandon their best resolutions! what can they say? that you have really a desire to be saved, and that you take the best method for it: All wise men will esteem you, many will imitate you, none but Libertines will blame such a truly Christian conduct; the rayllery's of such are reall praises and you ought not at all to be concerned' what they say or think.

Men are not asham'd to pass whole days at play and in vanity, of which they will certainly repent one day if they have not done it already; and can they be affraid to spend' eight days in the compass of every year, in preparing for another Life: in securing their Salvation?

RETREAT.

CHAP II.

Of the great importance of making one day's Retreat every Month.

Tis not very hard to make men sensible that a spiritual Retreat is an excellent means to amend our Lives and work out our salvation; but the difficulty lyes in persuading them that they may find time for it if they will: Eight days seem very long to them, and indeed there are many who cannot spare so much time together.

Multitude of business, the care of a family, want of health, the necessary duty's of their callings, are the reasons or pretences where by some excuse themselves from making a retreat of eight days: but no man can pretend that he his not able to allow one day in a month to that holy Exercise. Is any thing more reasonable then this? He may choose what day he pleases which renders it as easy as it is useful.

You are desir'd to spend one day

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in a Month to take care of what concerns you more than all things in the world, to apply your selves to the great business of your Life upon which Eternity depends : that when you have spent a whole month in what you call business, & which is rather the business of others than your own, you would give one day to the only business that regards your self : that after having labour'd for the world, you would labour one day for everlasting happiness.

Would any man refuse one day in a Month to serve his Friend ? Alas ! how many do men loose every Month in vain pleasure, in play, in trifling folly ? you are desir'd to spend but one for your soul ; you must surely be very indifferent for salvation, and very careless of what becomes of you hereafter if you refuse it. Especially since the following Chapters will render this practise so very easy that it seems impossible for any one reasonably to decline it.

How industrious are Merchants to improve every opportunity of

RETREAT.

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acquiring Riches ? How exact are they in stating their accounts from time to time, and observing how they thrive, what they have gain'd or lost ? Thus let us take one day at least to examine carefully the state of our Consciences and what progress we make in virtue.

The great benefit of this Christian practise is visible ; all sorts of men may find good by it ; 'tis very efficacious to reclaim sinners from their disorders and make them return to God, to confirm the virtuous and to elevate them to the highest degree of Christian perfection.

Besides the usefulness of meditating on the most important truths of Religion, it is almost impossible that a man who sets aside his most serious business and retires from the world to employ one day every Month in the serious consideration of the state of his soul, should not succeed. God who seeks us with so much patience when we fly from him, and who is not weary of offering us mercy not with standing our refusals, but calls on us even

when our earnestness after the world makes us deaf to his call, will never hide himselfe from those who come so often to meet him in the midst of solitude: he will never refuse to communicate himselfe abundantly to those who withdraw themselves from all things to hearken to him.

Neither our condition nor our employments require this of us nor do we do it out of custom or ostentation which is so inseparable from other acts of Piety: none of all these lead us to Retreat; nothing but a sincere desire to work out our salvation can bring us there; and can a sincere desire be ineffectual? Can it be attended with small profit? 'Tis hardly possible that a man who sets a part one day in a month to study the methods of living well, should live disorderly: Nor is he in danger of being surpriz'd by Death who so frequently and so exactly prepares for it.

But the importance of this Retreat will appear much greater if wee consider the necessity we lye under to reflect often on the great verity's of

our Faith. 'Tis from the want of this Reflection that we see so few Christians live up to the purity of their Profession. We see but few truly virtuous tho they are oblig'd to be so in a very high degree, because men seldom reflect on the divine Truths: they content themselves with submitting their Reason to Faith, they think it enough to believe: But tho we do not find many infidels in the Church, yet Jam a fraid wee find fewer Christians who seriously consider what they believe And this is the Reason that what we believe of the End of our Creation, of the small number of the elect, of the pains of Hell, and of everlasting misery, make so slight an impression on us. *This* want of Reflection has allway's been and still is the usual cause of our sins, of our return to them after we have resolv'd to quit them, and of our *advancing no more* in piety.

For as without reflecting on what we read, we shall learn but little by our reading, so we shall make small progress in virtue if wee do not frequent.

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ly reflect on what we believe. 'Tis generally from serious Reflections that great Conversions *spring*, and without it the most terrible Doctrines of Christianity, the most amazing accidents, and the most sensible Graces, will have no great Effect on us.

Can a man who attentively considers the vanity of the world and all its allurements, who reflects seriously on what he beleives of Hell judgment, and Eternity, who is affected with its rigours, and who foresees its consequences. Can such a man refuse to yield himselfe to the divine Grace, which allways makes use of those happy moments? 'Tis these Reflections that have peopled the desarts, that fill our Convents every Day, and that recall so many sinners from their Evill ways. If wee could once perswade men to reflect often, we should find their lives reform'd, we should see the ancient fervour of Religious houstes renew'd; this would be a sure way to prevent the greatest disorders, and to make saints.

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This is what you are to do in your Retreat; spend the day in reflecting seriously on the great Truths of our Religion, in examining your life, and meditating on the points of your Faith. 'Tis properly a Day Reflection which you may easily see must needs be useful, and that it concerns you very much to do it well. The Eight days retreat is for the same end, but besides that the length of the Time is a false Pretense to severall for performing it very carelessly, this must be more profitable, because that is usually made but once a year, this every month.

This is no new Devotion; but the practise of the greatest saints of Latter ages: 'Tis to this divine art that *Saint Ignatius* Founder of the Society of Jesus confesses, he ow'd his progress in virtue, and therefore he was so careful to recommend it to his Children. By these Retreats, *Saint Stanislaus* a novice of the same Society preserv'd his innocence, and acquir'd that tender devotion and that admirable Pie-

ty in a little time, which he practis'd in an ordinary way of Life. 'Tis by the same Retreats that *Blessed Lewis Gonzaga* more illustrious by his sanctity than by his birth, arriv'd to that sublime perfection for which we admire him. And 'tis without doubt from these Examples that we see it so frequently practis'd by those truly pious souls who desire to advance towards perfection.

But the first and great Example of these frequent and short Retreats is Christ himself who often withdrew from the multitude that followed him, and even from his own Disciples, to some mountain or desert, and the benefit which is daily receiv'd by this practise is an evident proof that it is pleasing to him.

We need not seek this solitude out of our own houses, we need not neglect our business or omit any of the Duty's of our calling; How many Sundays and Holidays are there in every Month? we may choose one of these, & that in which we shall have most leisure;

all that is desir'd of you is to retrench a visit or two to deny your selves some hours of diversion, and such frivolous occupations, that you may the better take care of your salvation. And can you be so much your own Enemy as to think Eternal happiness do's not deserve one Day in thirty?

You must certainly think heaven worth very little, if it be not worth your trying so efficacious and so easy a method to obtain it. In reality tho it cost you never so much, you cannot buy the blessing of a good Conscience too dear: that inward peace which surpasses imagination, that sweet confidence in the mercy of God, and all those innumerable advantages which are the constant fruits of this care of your salvation, can never be bought dear; is one day too much for this great work? Can one ask less? 'Tis astonishing that we must be forc'd to use arguments to persuade men to allow one day to make themselves happy.

We must expect that the Devil who is the declar'd Enemy our

souls, and who knows how many have been deliver'd from his power by these Retreats will certainly employ all his devices to hinder us from making them; to this End he will not fail to throw *rubs* in our way, he will represent an hundred little difficulties to our imaginations capable to dishearten an irresolute soul; sometimes we shall imagine our selves indisposed, some times out of humour; he will suggest to us a thousand false Reasons to persuade us to put it off till another time, that he may bring us under a kind of necessity of not doing it at all; for when he has once gain'd upon us to deferr it, we shall meet with a multitude of trivial affaires which shall seem pressing, till by putting it off from time to time we come at last to neglect it wholly. Let us then oppose a generous and fix'd resolution and good will to the artifices of the Tempter, and all these seeming difficulties will soon vanish.

This useful and necessary devotion is proper for all sorts of Christians

of what state or condition so ever: 'Tis equally beneficial to Religious and seculars, they who are not yet converted, they who begin to seek perfection, & they who are already advanc'd in the way, will all find profit by it. Especially the lukewarm carelesse souls can never find a surer Remedy; their condition is already very dangerous and if this do's not cure them, it is much to be feared that they are past hopes.

Church men and Religious are oblig'd by their vocation to a greater perfection than other Christians; this practise is an excellent means to obtain it, and ther is no sort of men who can with so much ease set apart one Day in a month for it.

If after all this there be found among those who are consecrated to God, any lazy soul who under pretence of want of leisure can not or will not find time for this holy Exercise, he will do well to consider what *Saint Augustin* writes to his Bishop *Valerius* on the same subject, *what answer shall I give to God?*

Quid enim
responsurus
sum Domino
judici? non
poteram,
cum Eccle-
siasticis ne-
gotiis impe-
direr; si ergo
mihi dicat,
ferre nequā
si villa Eccle-
sia... vir ad
dicendum a-
griculuram
meam vaca-
tionem tem-
poris tibi de-
fuisse causa-
ris? quid re-
pondeam?
rogote?
Aug. Epist.
148. ad Vale-
rian.

faith that great Saint) shall I tell him that a multitude of Ecclesiastical affaires took up all my Time so that I could have no leisure for Retreat to seek perfection? but if he reply, O wicked servant! You would have found leisure enough to absent your selfe to go to Law with any one that invaded your Rights, or that offer'd to deprive your Church of part of that revenue which is only useful for the relief of the poor, but you could not find time to retire for your own sanctification, though you knew how necessary it was to enable you to assist the Poor, and convert all sorts of people; What shall I answer to this reproach? so what shall we answer to the question that will be put to us one day, if we be now so indifferent for salvation as not to find eight or ten days for serious meditation? But my God! what shall we answer if we refuse to spend only one day in a month in Retreat?

The pretence of business being inseparable from every Day will not hold here; some days indeed

you may be oblig'd to follow it you are therefore at Liberty to choose what day you will: but if you object that it takes up every moment of our time, I must then give you the same Counsel which S. Eucherius gives to Valerian, Break that endless chaine of business, the business of your salvation is the first and greatest business you can have give it hence forth your first and chiefest care, let it be not only your principal business during your Retreat, but your only business which requires all your application.

CHAP III.

Of the Dispositions in which we must be, be to make the Retreat with Profit.

THE benefit of all pious exercises depends very much on our motives, on the dispositions of our souls, and on the means of performing them. We can have no ill motive in so holy a practise, nothing but a sincere desire to amend our Lives and to increase in virtue

Abrumpatur illa interminabilis secularium negotiorum catena, primas apud eos curas quæ prima habentur obtineant, summas quæ sibi sollicitudinis partes, salus quæ summa est vendicet, hæc nos occupet jam non prima S. Eucher. Epist. Lugd. in Epist. ad Valerian.

can lead us to retreat ? it is not likely we should have other motives ; selfe Love and pride cannot please themselves here because there is no noise or ostentation : Let us now take a view of the dispositions & methods whereby we may receive most profit. A sence of our want of it , and a perswasion that this practise may be very useful to us is one good disposition.

The rest which we ought to have if we would receive benefit ; are almost the same which the *Author* of the *retreat* according to the spirit & methode of *Saint Ignatius* sets down in his *Preface* , and they are chiefly five.

The first is an unfeigned desire to think seriously of our salvation ; a firm Resolution not to flatter our selves , but to examine carefully and exactly without disguising any thing, the state of our souls , what progress we make in the way of Perfection , what benefit we receive by the sacraments , what ground we gain , whether we be victorious over our selves , and whether we be in-

such a state as we would venture to appear before God in to give an account of our Lives , In fine whether we be such now , as we would desire to be at the hour of Death.

But all our examinations and discovery's will be to no purpose , unless we add to them a firm resolution to correct what ever is amiss : this is not one of those barren devotions which for the most part serve only to amuse the imperfect and render them more faulty ; they who have not a real design and an earnest desire to walk with God , will find but little satisfaction in it ; their coldness and indifference will soon make them weary.

The *second Disposition* is an humble distrust of our selves , supported by a firm confidence in God , knowing that salvation is chiefly his work , and that without him we can do nothing ; assuring our selves that since he hath inspir'd us with the desire of retiring once a month , he will not refuse us the necessary graces to profit by it , And indeed this desire of making use of the best

means to convert our selves to God is an evident proof that he who inspires it would fain have us turn and live ; and we find by experience that those unhappy men who dye in their sins are such as made but very little use of this excellent means of *Conversion*.

The *third Disposition* is a free heart, that gives its selfe to God without reserve, saying with *Saint Paul*, *Lord what wouldst thou have me to do ;* or with *David*, *My heart is ready, O God my heart is ready to do thy will*. The want of this disposition is the cause that the most pious practises are without effect.

For when we think of an entire conversion we are too often irresolute ; we will , & will not ; we know not what we would have ; and very often we imagine that we desire what we really and indeed do not desire. We are for capitulating with our maker , we are for retaining some part of what we promise him , we deliberate on every thing he requires , we dispute with

with him on every occasion. My God ! what is it we fear ? to throw our selves entirely on thee ? we are convinc'd that 'tis the best thing we can do, but we are unwilling to do it, because we foresee that if we once give our selves to thee we shall soon grow weary of the Creatures ; The communications of thy self to us will not fail to render us sensible of vanity , and make us loath them , and we are unwilling to be made sensible of it , or to loath them ; this is what we fear.

The *fourth Disposition* is a punctual observance of the order and rule of our Retreat , an exactness in every part of it , neglecting nothing that can contribute to our doing it well , judging nothing little that is capable of advancing so great a work as our salvation , being fully persuaded of this Truthe , that the great profit of this devotion depends on exactness in the least things. Whether it be that this carefulness is an evident proof of our sincerity , or that it prevails with God to refuse none of his Gra-

ces to those who neglect nothing to please him.

The *Fifth disposition* which is at is were the soul of all spiritual Retreats is, a perfect solitude both inward and outward, keeping our selves in a profound recollection and silence. And avoiding every thing that can any way distract us.

When an indolent soul is eight or ten days in retreat the Devil easily finds some occasion to disgust it with its holy employment: it thinks the time long when it has none but God to converse with. When it do's not find many spiritual consolations in prayer, when its thoughts are almost continually distracted, its want of fervour and the imperfection of its desires to be converted, render the most holy exercises of devotion very unpleasant; Eight days in Retreat seem an age, so that it counts all the hours and wishes for the last. But to these dangers we are not expos'd in one day's Retreat: 'tis but one day and if we make a right

use of it we may gain as much, and perhaps more profit then in a longer Retreat; which ought certainly to engage us to neglect nothing whereby we may improve such a precious season to the best advantage.

One Day in thirty is but a small matter, let us give it heartily and cheerfully to God; let us be very exact in the performance of the spiritual exercises that we may have nothing to reproach our selves. One day is quickly over, and it will be our unspeakable comfort to have past it well.

CHAP IV.

How we are to spend the Day of Retreat.

IT being left to every ones convenience to choose what day he pleases for this Retreat; we should pitch upon the day wherein we may have the least interruption, and which we can best have to our selves. If it be possible we should

receive the same day : Men of business and tradesmen would do well to choose an Holiday , & Religious men some day wherein they can without distraction give themselves entirely to this holy exercise.

We should endeavour to spend half an hour in Meditation the night before to dispose us for the duty's of the day , at least , we should read attentively the preparatory Meditation compos'd for that end , and if we have opportunity we should at the same time & with the same design visit our Redeemer in the Blessed Sacrament.

We must observe a profound silence during the whole Day , to which we must add an inward recollection : we must spend it in exact solitude , as far as our condition will permit , but we are not hereby oblig'd to neglect any of the duty's of our calling , nor are Religious persons forbid their ordinary recreations , & much less the Dutys of their vocation. We must make this Day the three Meditations design'd for each Month , and pass an

hour in reflecting on the practical Truths of Religion ; our *Confession* should be larger and more particular than ordinary that we may thereby endeavour to repair the faults of former *Confessions* , & chiefly to excite a true contrition in our hearts , wherein in all sorts of people and even the best Christians are too often faulty.

We must hear *Mass* and receive as if were to be our last *Communion* , and we must perform all the other exercises in the same disposition. Priests should examine themselves particularly whether their Lives are suitable to the Holiness of their Character , whether they celebrate with such affection as become men who are really penetrated with what they profess to believe. Let them offer that adorable Sacrifice with such a fervent Devotion that this Days *Mass* may be an atonement for the faults they have been guilty of in all the rest , and be a model of those they shall say for the future : making it their great business to profit by this , more than they have yet done.

We must be very careful to keep ourselves retir'd . and to avoid every thing that can possibly distract us : there us no danger of thinking the time long ; we shall find employment for every moment ; and one day so fill'd up is soon pass'd it is but a day , let us make it indeed a day of retreat ; all the time we are not in the Church , we should keep our selves shut up in our Chamber ; and indeed it would be well to do most of our spiritual Exercises in the Chamber , unless we have conveniency of being as much retir'd before the *blest* Sacrament.

Because this Exercise is very usefull to all sorts of men , and the greatest part cannot meditate , I have calculated these Meditations for the greater number ; to that end , I have made them long that they may find matter enough to take them up for an hour together ; that the very reading of them may be truly a Meditation , and that they may be profitable.

Such as can meditate may make

use of what part of them they find most for their purpose ; but these as well as the others must be very careful to avoid a fault to which most who meditate on the truths of our Religion are too subject. They must not content themselves with believing them , and think their work done when they are once convinced ; It is not enough to believe those important Truths , the Devils believe as much , perhaps more then we and tremble. We must not stop at speculation we must reduce them to practise. Our Meditations must all tend to reform us. 'Tis not sufficient to read , and believe the Truth of what we read , we must attentively consider every point and apply it to our selves. We must examine its consequences , and make those reflexions on them as we would do if we were on our death bed , when we know we shall have little or no time left to profit by them.

Let this be your way of Meditation ; if you read , do it with atten-

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tion ; pause upon each passage that affects you most , Put the question to your selfe , is this true ? have I liv'd up to these Rules ? what is it they require of me for the future ? And then reflect seriously on the dismall consequences attending your negligence , if this double discovery do not produce more fruit then your former Meditations have yet done.

You need not trouble your self to read the whole Meditation ; if one single reflection take up all the hour provided you receive good by it you have spent that hour well ; And the rest of the Meditation may serve you to read some other time of the day which is not absolutely allotted to some particular exercise.

A right consideration is very useful and therefore to be carefully perform'd. It consists in reading with application the Reflections at the end of the Book : you may pass lightly over those which are less suitable to you , and dwell longer on such heads as you find affect you

most ; and which are most proper for you.

Besides the hour usually spent after dinner in consideration , it would be well to allot half an hour in the morning for Religious men to reflect on the observation of their Rules , and others on the duty's of their particular callings ; observing exactly wherein they have fail'd , and prescribing to themselves such methods as may be most efficacious for their amendment : if we cannot spare half an hour we may divide the hour of consideration , one half for general reflections , and the second for those that concern our particular Rules and the duty's of our Callings.

And here we are always to remember that we must not content our selves in these spiritual exercises to form good designs , and take strong resolutions of changing our Lives ; it is to no purpose to resolve though we seem to do it never so sincerely , unless we likewise fix the particular means , and methods , by which we may effectually pra-

Life, what we have resolv'd.

It is not our business to read much; let us read less and profit more; we should choose to read only what is useful to us. 'Tis not sufficient to be able to say that we have read some spiritual discourse, we must read with a design to grow better by what we read.

We have already observ'd that Religious persons are not hereby dispens'd from the exercises of their Community's, nor even from their usual recreations; but having discover'd by their Examinations, the faults they are subject to in those Exercises, and recreations, they should begin that very Day to reap the benefit of their Retreat, by beginning to correct themselves and reform those faults, carrying themselves in every occasion as *men* who are already chang'd, And being careful, now more than ever, to lift up their hearts fervently to God, and beg him to preserve them from that distraction, and dissipation, of mind, which generally accompany's conversation.

The great design of this spiritual Retreat being to prepare us for Death, I have compos'd a third Meditation on the sentiments we shall have in that last hour, to be read in every Retreat. And it being the most proper subject for the End I propos'd to my selfe, I judg'd the same Meditation might be renew'd every Month.

The chief benefit we are to receive by this pious Exercises being a reformation of all the faults we have discover'd in our selves since the last Retreat, a more earnest longing for perfection, the getting the Victory over our favourite Passion, a more ardent Love to our Redeemer, particularly in the adorable Sacrament, and a greater exactness in all our Duty's, we are at the beginning of each Retreat to propose these things to our selves as the end for which we make it. And seeing it is a direct preparation for Death, we are to come out of it in such a state, as we would desire to be in, if we were immediately to dye. And we must be careful to keep our selves

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in the same disposition.

General resolutions are commonly useless and to no purpose, our best way is to pitch upon some particular fault, which may be the subject of our daily Examination, and to regulate the means which we will every day employ, to reform it, till the next Retreat.

And the better to preserve those Good dispositions we should first render thanks to God for the Graces he has bestow'd on us during the Retreat. We should then offer up all our Resolutions to him, and renew them with more earnestness; beseeching the Blessed Virgin to intercede for us with her son, that he would give us his Grace where by we may be render'd faithful to the End, and begging that she would undertake for our fidelity, which she can obtain for us.

But after all these Resolutions, we must not rely so much upon them as to forget our weakness; for nothing is more dangerous then too much security.

It very much concerns us, to be

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exact in our watch, the first three or four Days; after this we shall find the difficulty is lessen, so that we shall execute our resolutions with Ease; The greatest difficulties are in the beginning, and the surest way to maintain our fervour is, without any delay to declare our selves for virtue.

A MEDITATION to prepare for Retreat.

THE subject of this Meditation is taken out of the Parable in the thirteenth of Saint Luke: of the man Luke. 23. 62 who sought fruit on a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and finding none said to the dresser of the Vineyard, It is now three years that I come seeking fruit on this Fig-tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground? But his servant desir'd him to wait one year more that he might dig about it and dung it, and if after all his care it should be still unfruitful then he would cut it down. 7. &c.

FIRST POINT.

Consider with what care God hath hitherto cultivated us that we might bring forth fruit. We came into the world not only a barren tree but corrupted and spoil'd by original Sin, fit for nothing but to be cast into Hell Fire. The singular Mercy of God has prefer'd us to many others, has planted us in his Church by making us Christians, or in the fertile field of a Religious Life, if by a greater effect of his Love he has call'd us to that state.

Have we ever truly known the advantage of being planted in this holy ground, cultivated by the labours and water'd by the sweat and blood of him who is both God and man? This ground in which we are hath produc'd those Hero's of Christianity, and bears every day a multitude of saints, of all sexes, ages, & conditions. Those excellent souls with the same manuring, that is with the same assistance that is given us, have and do every day bring forth fruit worthy of Eternal Life. They had no other

Gospel, no other Sacraments then we have; The Grace of God abounds at all times; ther Rules were not different from ours, only they were more faithful to those Rules, by the exact observation of which alone, they are become great saints. We have the benefit of their Examples, and many proper helps which they wanted.

Add to these advantages, the particular favours we have receiv'd from God; call to mind all the pains he hath taken to make us fruitful; all the good thoughts he hath inspir'd us with; all the pious Resolutions he hath excited in us since we had the use of Reason; his favours have been innumerable since we have been in his service; how often hath he nourish'd us with the food of Angels, his owne flesh? how often have we heard him speaking to our hearts? how often has he enlighten'd us? how many Graces have we receiv'd from him in our Retreats, and Communions? and how many other favours hath he heap'd on us.

Half these are sufficient to make

a great saint; nay there are many blessed spirits now in heaven who never had all these advantages and yet they bare much fruit: They made admirable use of their talents; their Lives were full of good works, which have adorn'd them with merits whereby they now possess everlasting happiness, a just reward of their Fidelity. Let us now consider seriously and impartially, whether the same murthering & the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, have made us like bear much fruit.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that the fruits God requires of us, are not dry and barren devotions and appearances of virtue, which serve for the most part onely to amuse the imperfect, who with all their pretended good works pass their whole Lives in sloth & tepidity without growing better in any one point. Their specious virtues are but leaves, but gaudy out sides which deceive men and themselves too, making them take the effects of passion or humane respect, of Education,

or of their natural temper, for real virtues.

The Fruits which *Saint John* calls *Fruits worthy of penance*, and *Saint Paul* the *Fruits of the spirit*, are the effects of a true love to God and a perfect charity towards our neighbour: They are such as a solid Piety produces, an extreme horror for the smallest sin, a violent hunger after Righteousness, an universal constant and continual Mortification; a profound humility, a great exactness in all the duty's of our Calling; they are, an exceeding aversion for every thing our Saviour hates, and an high esteem for every thing he loves: The Victory over our passions, the reformation of our Lives and conduct, are the Fruits that he expects from us. This is the meaning of those words, *Bring forth fruits worthy of penance*, shew by your works & by the whole course of your Life that you are really converted.

Matt. 3. 8.
Gal. 5. 22.
23. &c.

Matt. 3. 8.

Here let us examine our selves; Have we brought forth many of these Fruits? God hath been careful

to cultivate us these three, these ten years, that we might be fruitful; many would have been saints with much less Graces, and yet all have not perhaps made one good Religious, or one good Christian. 'Tis not the fault of the ground in which I am planted, it is holy ground and yields an hundred fold, even many of my acquaintance with less advantages bring forth much more fruit than I.

What benefit have I receiv'd by so many Masses? what am I the better for so many Communions; One single Communion is able to elevate a soul to a sublime perfection, yet I who have receiv'd it may be one or two hundred times have not yet reform'd any one fault. After so many Devotions am I more humble, more exact, more mortified? Do I love my God and Saviour more?

What is become of all the good thoughts I have formerly had? where is all my fervour? what is become of that inward peace and true pleasure which I have sometimes expe-

rien'd in my Devotions? what is become of all my holy Resolutions? and all my fair promises? alas! perhaps we find no traces of them all but a sad remembrance which serves only to shew us, how far we are from the state in which we ought to be.

Has not our ingratitude towards God augmented proportionably to the increase of his blessings? And do's it not seem that his care to make us fruitful, serves only to make us more unprofitable? But that which ought to humble us more is, that after having spent ten or twenty years in the way of Perfection, we should think ourselves happy to be as much advanc'd as as we were when we began. Yet still the time passes, and the year draws towards an end, when the owner weary of the barrenness of his Fig-tree after so much pains, is resolv'd to cut it down & cast it into the Fire.

THIRD POINT.

Consider the danger to which we

expose ourselves while we are unprofitable : and what Reason we have to fear least we draw upon our heads the vengeance of God and the terrible sentence of Reprobation which he has pronounc'd against the Barten Tree.

How many Graces have we lost ? Of how many have we depriv'd our selves ? Those Graces which we have made useless by our unfaithfulness, are the fruits of the Death and of the blood of Christ were sufficient to convert the Heathens, and increase the number of Saints in heaven, after having augmented the number of true Christians on Earth. How many years together has the blessed Jesus visited us to see if we would bring forth fruit, and hath either found nothing but leaves or such fruit as the Vale of Sodom produces, fair to the Eye but rottenness and ashes at the heart ? Has he not then just reason to say to us as he did to his vineyard by the Prophet, *What could I do more for my Vineyard that I have not done in it ?* After all my care & pains to improve it, when

Quid est
quod debu-
ultra facere
vineæ meæ
& non feci ?
Is : 5. 4.

I expected it should bring forth good grapes it brought forth wil'd Grapes. May not our saviour make us the same reproach ? we know it is too well grounded ; what answer shall we give ?

But let us fear and tremble when we come to consider the just vengeance which he resolves to take on this unfruitful vine, *And now I will shew what I will do to my Vineyard, I will take away the hedge thereof and it shall be eaten up, I will break down the walls thereof and it shall be trodden down ; I will lay it waste it shall not be pruned or dig'd, but there shall come brayars and thorns ;* and that its ruine may be without remedy, *I will command the clouds not to rain upon such ungrateful ground which brings forth only bad fruit ?*

We may easily understand the meaning of these words ; let us now apply them to our selves ; we have hitherto brought forth only leaves & rotten fruit, God will therefore deprive us of those great helps which we render useless. When that hedge is once taken away, that inward re-

Et nunc vobis ostendam quid ego faciam vineæ : auferam sepem ejus, & ponam eam desertam ; non putabitur & non fodietur, & ascendent vepres & spinæ, & nubibus mandabo ne pluant super eam imbrem.
x. 5. 6.

collection once lost, our hearts will run after every object, and we shall become a prey to our unruly Passions. God will speak no more to our hearts: All the exhortations and Counsells of wise and zealous Directors will make no impression on us; the source of Grace will be dry'd up; and what will become of a soul in this wretched state? which every one that continues barren and unprofitable must certainly expect.

Is there no danger of our being like a dead branch which cutoff from its trunk, withers and is good for nothing but the Fire? Let us remember, the slothful servant was not condemn'd for losing his Talent but for not improving it; and 'tis not only the tree that bringeth forth no fruit, but every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit shall be cut down, & burn'd

We flatter our selves that God will wait a little longer, but perhaps *the ax is already laid to the root of the Tree*: this perhaps is the last offer of Grace, the last time that God

*Matt. 25.
20. &c.*

Matt. 3. 10.

*Jam enim
securis ad ra-
dicem arbo-
ris posita est.
Matt. 3. 10.*

will call upon us, the last opportunity we shall ever have to become fruitful. God hath already waited so long, he hath so often warned and exhorted us, he has so often look'd whether we began to bear fruit after all his care & pains, finding his expectation not comply'd with, & justly incens'd at our long barrenness he is it may be ready to pronounce the sentence which was given against the barren fig-tree, *Cut it down why cumbereth it the ground*: throw that unprofitable tree into the fire: why should I suffer it any longer to take up the place of a tree that would bring forth good fruit.

'Tis in consequence of this dreadful sentence, that so many who began well, but did not faithfully correspond with the divine grace have ended so ill. That so many who were call'd did not persevere, but have left their place and their Crown to others, who became wise by their Example. Have not we reason to fear it may be our case after all God has done to make us bear good fruit? have we

*Succide er-
go illam ut
quid terram
occupat. Luc
3. 7.*

made suitable returns for all his pains; have not the few good works we have done been spoil'd by ill motives? And are we rich in virtues and merits?

O my God enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is innocent before thee. I confess that I have been hitherto not only a barren but a rotten Tree, I have been unprofitable in such fruitfull ground, and am good for no thing but to be cast into the fire, but oh! *have patience ye a little With me*, not for a year but for one day, and I trust by the assistance of thy grace to make such good use of this day that I shall be no longer unfruitful.

Patientiam
habe in me.
Mat. 18. 29.

I dare hope that thou would'st not have inclin'd my will to seek the insolitude, thou would'st not have inspir'd me with the desire, nor afforded me time for this retreat, were it not that thou art willing to defer the punishment I deserve for my unfaithfulness to thy Grace, and for making no better use of thy assistance. Perhaps this is the last Day of thy forbearance,

bearance, & I have all the reason in the world to apprehend that if I make not good use of this day, thou hast determin'd to delay my sentence no longer. But I rely wholly upon thy infinite mercy, and am resolv'd so to spend this Day, that if it should be the last of my Life, I may be able to appear before thee and present thee the Fruits of it.

JANUARY AND JULY

FIRST MEDITATION

OF MANS END.

FIRST POINT. *Man was created to serve God.*

SECOND POINT. *Man was created to save himselfe in serving God.*

FIRST POINT.

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Consider that we came not into the world by chance, God had an end in drawing us out of nothing, and that end was no other then his own glory: he created us only to know, love & serve him; we glorify him by knowing and loving him, we shew our love by serving him, and we serve him when we keep his Commandments.

This was his End & design in our Creation, he could have not created us, but he could not create us for another End: the disorders of our Lives may indeed make us forget our

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duty but it cannot change our ultimate End. Let us be never so dissolute it will still be true, that we are not sent into the world to heap up Riches, to acquire honours, to enjoy a multitude of pleasures & become great, we are sent into the world only to serve God. Kings and their people, the learn'd & the ignorant, the Rich and the poor are in the World only for this End. Tho there be a great difference in mens conditions and a subordination among them, tho some are born Masters and others Subjects, they are all made for the same ultimate End, & all agree in this point that they are created only to know, to love & to serve God.

The fire is not more created to give heat, and the sun light, then man is to love and serve God, who has made that almost infinite number of Creatures only to help us in attaining this End, there being not one among them all which in its selfe do's not furnish us with a means to know God, a motive to love, and away to serve him.

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We need only consult our own hearts on this subject, and we shall find that the extreme desire to be happy which is implanted in our natures, and the absolute impossibility of being so in this Life, are a sensible proof that man was not made for any created object. He must elevate his heart to God; & he will immediately find a full and perfect peace which alone fixes all his desires; he feels a sweetness which he never felt any where else, & which is an evident mark that God alone is his End, and he Center of his Rest.

Fecisti nos Domine ad te & inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.

We are then in the world only to serve God, this is the End of all Men; but do all men live for that End? this is the only thing necessary of which the son of God speaks in the Gospel, do we look upon it as such?

How earnest are we to accomplish our designs? to acquit ourselves, well of our employments, and to serve our Princes? Are we as earnest to serve God? do not men generally act as if they valued every thing but him? How often is the title of a man of the

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Gown or of the sword, prefer'd to that of Gods servant? How often do the Maxims of the World get the better of the Duty's of a Christian? Every one has his designs and seeks his own Ends; surely we are not persuaded that God is our End seeing we take so little pains to seek him as such.

This Truth of Gods being our End is one of the first Truth's we learn, yet it is that which we think least of, and are least affected with when we do think of it. We are us'd from our Cradles to hear that we are created only to serve God, but we are not at all touch'd with the meaning of those words, which in all probability we never truly understood much less foresaw their consequences. For if be true that I live in this World only to serve God, then every one of my actions ought to be directed to him, and it may be I have not in all my Life done any one single action onely for him.

This is the fundamental Verity of our Religion, do we live up to this

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important Truth? The whole Gospel is founded on this as its chief maxime, but who that examines our manner & our maxims can think that God is our ultimate End? We think of every thing but God, as if we thought him nothing.

We find time for every thing except for loving and serving God, we are delighted with riches, honours, and pleasures, God alone hath no charms for us: And yet where can we find any true pleasure but in him only? Thou Lord hast created us for thy selfe saith Saint Augustin, and our hearts will be allwayes uneasy and unquiet till they rest in thee.

Have we not found this by frequent experience in those very things whereof we have been most fond? were we satisfied when we had obtain'd them? has not the very possession been sufficient to disgust us with them, and make us slight them? 'tis to no purpose to deceive our selves that we may sin with less fear, these very disgusts

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these continual disquiets, are a secret voice which admonishes us that we are not made for the Creatures, that every thing in the world is but vanity, amusement, and vexation of spirit, and that we are made only for God.

We cannot choose or make any other End to our selves, he who gave us our being hath put us under an indispensable necessity of returning to him; If he had left us at Liberty to make choice of God the infinite good for our last End, could we have thought of any other? and now that he has subjected us to the happy necessity of having no other, we are very little concerned to attain it.

Ingrateful men! are you not well enough provided for to have God for your last End? *How long will you halt between two opinions? If the Lord be God follow him: why will you be divided between God and the World? If God be your only master, why do you not serve him alone?*

Usquequo claudicatis in duas partes? si Dominus est Deus sequimini eum. 3. Reg. 8. 21.

My God! what do I stay for?

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am I too young ? have I too much health ? am I afraid to serve thee too long if I begin so soon ? I who am left in the world onely to serve thee.

Alas ! I made no difficulty of spending the best part of my Life in unprofitable amusements in the service of the World, and now that I am disabus'd and convinc'd of my folly shall I refuse thee the rest of my Life ? shall I balance one moment to love thee ?

'Tis strange that I stand in need of so many reasons & reflections to resolve upon a thing of this importance, & of which I am fully convinc'd, but it is yet stranger that all these reflections do not make me resolve.

Do I stay till I am at last Extremity ? till I am told that I have but a few days left to think seriously of my Conversion ?

No my God ! it is resolv'd ; thou hast made me only for thy selfe, and for the future I will be wholly thine: 'tis true I begin late to serve thee, but I am resolv'd to have this satis-

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faction in Death whenever it comes, that I did begin to serve thee.

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SECOND POINT.

Consider that God who has created us only to serve him, is pleas'd by a singular goodness so to order it, that we cannot serve him without saving our selves. He did from the beginning design our Eternal happiness in creating us for his Glory ; & seeing that Eternal happiness is no otherwise propos'd then as a reward, our whole life is given us only that we may deserve it by obedience to those Laws and Commandments which he hath made for that End. And the desire of happiness which is natural to every man do's as it were by instinct advertise us in the midst of our disorders that we are plac'd in the world only to work out our Eternal salvation in Heaven.

The Checks of our Consciences which are hardly ever quite stifled, cry loud to us that we put our selves in danger of being lost when we for-

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get our end never so little. And are not the fears of hell, and of the dreadful judgements of God, which shake the most hardened sinners, a sufficient monitor telling us incessantly that we are in the world only to be saved?

This is the only business of all the world, this is our last End, we are not here to obtain great Employments or dignity's, to render ourselves excellent in this or that profession, nor to establish a reputation by our good qualities; You are rais'd to that dignity, you are put in that station, God has given you those qualities, & made you successful only that these may be helps to your salvation, may be the means to bring you more easily to him your last End.

We are then created only that we may be saved, that we may avoid an Eternity of woe in Hell, and obtain an happiness in Paradise which shall never end. We are made only for Heaven, we are but banish'd men here, or at best but travellers who should rejoice when they find them-

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selves near the End of their journey and of their banishment.

But do we look upon our selves as such? Have we these thoughts of Heaven? would any one that examines our conduct think that we believe our salvation to be our last End? Men easily find means to attain their ends, surely there are but few who make heaven their great design since there are so few who take the right methods to obtain it.

The End of a Merchant in his Trade, of a scholar in his study's, of a Courtier in his carriage, of a soldier in the midst of dangers is easily known; but is it as visible that every man in his station and employment seeks onely God, and the salvation of his soul as his last End.

Yet what do's it profit a man to raise a great fortune to gain the whole world and loose his soul? What is there in all the world that can make him amends for the loss of that? It would have been much better for him

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not to have been born, then not to be saved.

Let us remember that if we do not make God our sovereign happiness; he will be our sovereign misery; we may be without every thing else but we cannot be without this good; tho a man be poor, forsaken, despis'd or forgo ten, if he save his soul he will be happy to all Eternity and want nothing; but let him be never so rich, happy, and esteem'd in the world, if he be damn'd he is miserable for ever.

What are those great & extraordinary men who fill'd the world with their brave actions, what are they the better for all the honour they gain'd, if they are damn'd? suppose you saw the richest man in the world on his Deathbed, one who had enjoy'd all sorts of pleasures, who had arriv'd to the highest pitch of Glory and greatness, who had been successful in all his undertakings, and had only neglect'd his soul; ask him, what do all your wealth, your greatness, and your

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pleasures avail you? all these are pass'd and gone as if they had never been, but your soul which you have lost, & those pains which are the sad consequences, of that loss, will never pass away.

Let us consider what thoughts we shall have in those last moments: what shall we then think of every thing that is now an obstacle to our salvation? How will all our great designs and projects which took us up entirely, appear then?

We venture our souls rather then disoblige a friend, then loose an opportunity of enriching our Children, or of distinguishing our selves in the world. What will our opinion of all this be when Death comes? will the remembrance of all past greatness comfort a man who knows he is falling into Hell? Will those pretended friends be much oblig'd to us for having ruin'd our selves to please them? shall we be much oblig'd to them who are the cause of our damnation, and for whose sakes we are lost?

Wretched Father! that labours and

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sweats, that ruins his health and shortens his Life to get an Estate for his Children, and is damn'd for his pains; who will thank him for it?

Who would not be rich if an earnest desire to be so were sufficient, we may be saints if we will by the help of grace which is never wanting, & yet we are unwilling to be so: And indeed if we are not saints it is because we will not.

'Tis surprising that men who love themselves so much should reflect so little on a matter of this consequence: that men who in all other things are wise and prudent, should yet every day go out of the world without having once seriously considered why they were sent into it, whence they came, and whither they are to go after Death. And yet cheat themselves at last with an appearance of conversion.

O Divine saviour! where is that passionate desire of our salvation which mov'd thee to do such great things? How long wilt thou suffer so many souls to be lost, for whom

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thou hast paid so great a price? Art not thou still our God, and are not we thy people? Canst thou ever forget that thou art my saviour? I have not indeed made a right use of my happiness in being design'd only for thee, I have forgot thee to place my affections upon the Creatures. I have wander'd out of the way that leads to my last End, and refus'd to obey the voice of the good shepherd who call'd me. But now I see and repent of my wandering; however unfaithful I have been, the sense thou hast given me of my unfaithfulness, makes me hope that thou wilt have mercy on me: thou lovedst me when I did not love thee, and when I did all I could to make thee hate me thou sought'st even when I fled most from thee. O my God! wilt thou refuse me now that I am resolv'd to love thee? wilt thou hide thy selfe from me now that I seek thee? I cannot fear this from so infinitely good and merciful a God.

I acknowledge that I was made

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only to love and serve thee, and
I am resolv'd O my God by the as-
sistance of thy Grace that I will both
love and serve thee. And I hope in
thy mercy that since thou hast patient-
ly born with my disobedience so
long thou wilt now be so gracious
as to pardon and forgive it.

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SECOND MEDITATION.

O F T H E M E A N ' S
*which are given us to attain
our ultimate end.*

FIRST POINT *Of the means
common to all Christians.*

SECOND POINT *The particular
means proper for each Christian.*

FIRST POINT

C Onsider that God not content
to have created us for himselfe
as for our ultimate End, has out of
his great goodness indispensably en-
gag'd us to seek him, by those nu-
merous meanes which he hath gi-
ven us to attain that End. Eve-
ry creature taken in its selfe is an
help to our knowledge & Love of
him; And 'tis only our abuse of
them that makes any of them hin-
derances. The happiness and mis-
fortunes of our Lives, the chastise-

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mens wherewith God corrects our unfaithfulness, & our very faults, may be so many furtherances of our Salvation. Even the devices and temptations of our mortal Enemy the Devil, may be a means to save us.

Without grace it is impossible to attain our ultimate End; all our endeavours without it are vain; 'Tis an article of Faith that we may be wanting to the Grace of God: there is not one soul in Hell who is not damn'd by his own fault.

We are weak the occasions of sin are many, and our corrupted hearts are violently inclin'd to it, but can we have greater assistance to prevent our falls, and to raise us up again when we are fallen? Are we sensible of the facility with which we may work out our salvation if we will have recourse to those Excellent means which God hath put into our hands? So many Sacraments whereby all the merits of our Saviour are apply'd to us, in which we are as it were bath'd in his blood,

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where in our souls feed on the Body and Blood of that Divine Redeemer, are without doubt most effectual and easy means to attain our great End.

It was easy for the Disciples to be saints who had their Divine Saviour always with them: And shall it be more difficult for us who have him continually present in the Eucharist? their happiness consisted in having their requests granted; what should hinder our obtaining of him as they whatever we desire.

Another very effectual means is frequent Prayer, for our Saviour hath solemnly engag'd his word that he will grant whatever we ask in his Name.

His promises are without exception, not limited to any Sort of men: Do but ask. Every body surely is able to ask, and they who will not do most certainly value Heaven at a very low rate since they think it not worth their asking.

If we had only the Sacrifice of the Altar, would not our Salvation be sure? what Grace, what assistance

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can we need which our Redeemer who gives himselfe as an earnest of his grace cannot obtain? And how can we doubt his so often reiterated promises that he desires our happiness? We are all debtors to the justice of God, and stand in need of extraordinary helps; One Mass, one Communion bestows on us a treasure sufficient to pay all our debts and supply all our needs. Let us offer up that Host to his Eternal Father. Who we are sure cannot but be pleas'd with it; It is sufficient to blot out the sins of all mankind; and whose fault will it be, if it do's not efface ours?

Certainly if God had left it to us to choose the most proper means of Salvation, we should never have been able to find so many, so easy; and so effectual; we should never have thought of proposing what Christ has done for us. And yet what use have we hitherto made of those means? And what must we think of our selves and of our unprofitableness under them? surely we have no great mind to be saved if we lose our

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souls in the midst of so powerful and such easy means of salvation; what excuse shall we invent what shadow of pretence can we have to justify our selves, if we neglect them.

What shall we answer to the reproaches of the Heathens? What shall we answer when our Saviour himselfe reproaches and confounds us with the example of those Pagans who only out of a vain desire of Glory, & for an imaginary recompense, were such lovers of virtue such haters of vice, & even superstitiously devout? what would they have done if they had enjoy'd our helps.

What regret must a Christian have who is damn'd with all those advantages? what shall I be the better for them if I be damn'd? And what must I expect if I make no better use of them for the future?

SECOND POINT.

Consider that besides those general helps common to all Christians every man has some means proper for

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him, whereby he may easily become a great Saint. His temper, his education, parts, his very passions if rightly manag'd will much contribute to it. The Grace of God commonly makes use of every one of these, and whether our inclinations be good or bad, we may with a little resolution make them all serve to our progress in virtue.

Every sickness and unfortunate accident of our Lives, is sent on purpose to bring us nearer to our last end, by separating us, or at least by weaning our affections from sensible objects, which take up too much of our time and thoughts.

But the surest and most effectual means are those which every man meets with in the condition wherein God hath plac'd him. Each state of Life is a different way by which the divine Providence leads us to our ultimate End. It is a great Error to think that we cannot attain Perfection without doing something extraordinary; we may be very eminent saints only by acquitting our selves exactly of the duty's of our callings.

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The Virtuous Woman, that Heroine so highly prais'd in Holy writ, acquir'd all those merits only by taking care of her Family. And Jesus Christ himselfe for thirty years together, thought he could do nothing more becoming him, then to discharge the duty's of that humble and poor condition which he had chosen.

All other ways are subject to illusion; we deceive our selves by doing much unless we do what we ought, he do's what he ought who fulfill's the will of God, which we are sure we fulfill when we are exact in the smallest duty's of our callings.

They who live in the world need not seek means of Sanctification out of their ordinary course of Life, in the duty's of each day they will find matter enough to make them saints; and they are inexcusable before God if they neglect those means, since they take much more pains for the World, then he requires them to take for him, that they may be saved.

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Religious men find in their state, all, and indeed the only means of perfection that are proper for them; which consist in a punctual observation of their Rule and vows. Those Rules have already made the Saints that are honour'd in their Order, and he who has embrac'd them can never hope to be a Saint by any other means than the observation of the Rules.

Don't pretend that they seem of small consequence, that they do not bind you under pain of sin; remember there is nothing little in the service of God. Did you enter into Religion to seek perfection only when you were forc'd to it? How will you distinguish your selfe from other Religious, if it be not by exactness in your particular duties? And how will you pretend to merit supply's of grace proportionable to your necessities, if it be not by this exact observation of your Rule.

We need not wonder that so many Communions, & so many helps have no effect on us; and that after all those advantages we are more lukewarm,

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lukewarm, and have more reason to fear, tho we seem to have made great progress: 'tis because we neglect the particular meanes which we have in our own hands, this renders all the rest ineffectual: As the best Physick do's us more harm then good when we neglect the least precautions.

Let not a Religious man who is careless of observing his Rule expect any benefit by his Communions; Let not a worldly person who hath no care of his family, who neglects the Duty's of his particular station, expect to be the better for all his pretended good works, How should we like a servant that meanes never so well, that do's never so many good things, if he do's not his Duty: And how can he do his Duty who do's not do what his Master commands?

Let us now reflect seriously on our conduct; what use have we made of the meanes of salvation? have we improv'd the particular?

God will not only examine and severely punish the Evil we have done, but the Good we have not done

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when it was in our power, and the good we have not done well. Are we ready to give an account of our Lives immediately? all the actions of our Lives should have God for their End, and can we find one among them all, that was done only for him?

Let us inquire what can be the cause, that the Sacraments, and the spiritual Exercises have hitherto done us so little good. Let us impartially examine what use we have made of the means of perfection that are in our hands. If we be engag'd in the world, how have we discharg'd the duty's of our condition? If we be Religious or Ecclesiastiques, how have we acquitted our selves of our obligations, and observ'd our Rule? By this examination we shall be able to excite an hearty sorrow for our past faults, and to make such Resolutions as may be effectual for our future amendment.

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THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE SENTIMENTS

*We shall have at the hour
of Death.*

FIRST POINT. *The sentiments
of a dying man who has lead
a sinful, and lukewarm Life.*

SECOND POINT. *The sentiments
of a dying man, who has liv'd a
fervent & virtuous Life.*

For the better fixing your imagination, and to avoid distraction, suppose your selfe upon your death-bed having but a few hours to live, reduc'd as you will be one day, to the last extremity of weakness, almost motionless, continually unquiet, your soul disorder'd with fear, your heart already seiz'd by Death's convulsions, your breath failing, a cold sweat spreading its selfe over your whole body, which smells already like a dead Corps, your checks hollow, your colour

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chang'd, your hair moist with a mortal damp: your eyes sunck, staring frightfully, leaving you only sight to discover your pitiful condition, & just ready to close themselves for ever. Suppose your selfe abandon'd by all you lov'd in the World, and upon the point of expiring in the Arms of some Domestick, and unknown person.

Then for a second Prelude beg of God to assist you with his grace that you may be throwly affected with the consequences of that important moment where on Eternity depends, & so penetrated by it, that it may make the same impression on you now, as it will do when you see it approach, & that you may be there by incited to take the surest methods of Salvation.

FIRST POINT.

Consider how strangely a dying man is chang'd; he who a few days ago was strong and in perfect health, enjoying his Riches and honours and contriving great projects, is all on a sudden confin'd to his bed,

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reduc'd to extremity, unable to help himselfe, incapable of pleasure, forc'd to abandon all, & to be abandon'd by all, My God! what is man? tho never so Rich and great; since a few hours sickness are able to make him useless to all the world, and render all the world of no use to him.

We think our selves happy when we have Riches enough to serve us many years, but alas! what are we the better for many years, riches if we have not many years, to enjoy them?

What is able to comfort a sinner in this miserable condition? when the remembrance of past pleasures leave only a mortal regret behind them; & the fear of future pains makes him already begin to feel them. When God and man, when every thing in the world conspire to terrify and affright him. How do the tears of Friends cut him to the heart, and the Assistants encrease his apprehensions? how sensible must the grief of his wife, the tears of his Children, and the hurry of his servants

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be to him? with what fear has he recourse to desperate remedies, and what a terror is it to find those remedies ineffectual?

And when to calm his frights his Confessor approaches, can we think that the sight of him allay's his trouble? he sweats & is quite confounded; and in this agony he is to prepare for death, but is this a fit time, is he in a condition to prepare? when fear and trouble has weakened and clouded his Reason, how can he go about it? He speaks not his own thoughts or sentiments, he onely repeats what he hears his Confessor say, he neither knows what he says, nor what he ought to say.

Even Jesus Christ himselfe whose presence in this last hour is the great consolation of a dying Saint, visits the dying sinner only to upbraid him. & make him more sensible of his impiety's. And indeed what benefit can he expect from the last Sacraments being so ill prepar'd to receive them?

With whom shall he find ease?

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For as soon as he has receiv'd the rights of the Church, his friends, and Relations retire. Let us now consider what his thoughts will be when the Priest only stays to present him the Crucifix, & inform him that there is no farther hopes of recovery, that now being bereft of all Creatures, Jesus Christ alone must be his refuge and consolation. Jesus Christ crucified must be now your only hope, you must seek strength in those sacred wounds, against the fear of Death, for they are able to soften all its rigours, to sweeten its bitterness: receive then Dear Brother this comfortable Object, in whose Arms I leave you.

This is the End of all the vain projects, of all the greatness, and pleasures of worldly men; In what a condition is a libertine who has neglected Jesus Christ all his Life, which he has spent in sin and pleasure and in an extreme carelessness of Eternity? what consolation can he find now in holding a Cruci-

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fix in his hand ?

If he has no resemblance of a crucify'd Jesus : he was never sensibly affected with the terrible verity's of our holy Religion, but laugh'd at the most serious Exercises of Piety, what thoughts can he have when he has nothing but a Crucifix to entertain himselfe withal ?

He may indeed make a good use of the little time that is left ; but alas ! his weakness and feares do compose his Reason, and do not leave him the Liberty that is necessary to use it well.

Yet the Sick man dyes and there is little hope that the prayers of the Church should give him any consolation, they are indeed full of comfort for those who dye well, but what comfort can they afford a dying sinner whom every word reproaches with the disorders of his Life ?

What terror must it be to him to hear the Priest pronounce those words, *Christian Soul go out of the world* ; to him who lov'd the world

so much, who perhaps never lov'd any thing else nor ever made one step towards Heaven ? Go out, there is no more to do ; you must leave all your delights, tho you be never so fond of them, & unwilling to quit them ; you would leave nothing but you must dye to all.

The Charitable recommendation, *May'st thou enter into the habitation of peace, and may'st thou dwell in the holy peace of Sion*, can be no comfort to one who knows they have no reason to make that prayer for him.

How can be expect any benefit from that petition, *pity O Lord his sighs, and let his teares prevail with thee* ? if his grief proceeds only from his fondness of the world, and if he weeps because he is forc'd to quit it and because he can sin no longer.

The priest go's on, *Look O Lord upon thy creature, made by thy selfe, and not by strange Gods, own the work of thy hands* ; But if the dying man has alwayes lov'd the Creature more then his Creator, if his Life

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Hodie sit
in pace locus
tus, & ha-
bitatio tua in
sancta Sion.

Miserere
Domine ge-
mitum, mi-
serere lachry-
marum ejus.

Agnosce Do-
mine Crea-
turam tuam
non à Diis a-
lienis crea-
tam, sed à so-
lo Deo vivo
& vero.

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Proficisce-
re anima
Christiana
de hoc mun-
do.

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has not been at all conformable to the maxims of Christ, how can he be like his Saviour in this last hour? what must he expect seeing he is not like him, and how terrible must his apprehensions be of what is to come after Death?

Great God! in what a condition is a dying man, torn with grief and despair without hope? If he have yet his senses left, every thing that presents its selfe, every thing he hears, is an addition to his fear & trouble; and when he has lost his senses, when external objects can make no more impression on him, then the remembrance of all his Sins, of all the ill he has done, of all the good he has neglected when it was in his power, or which he has done ill, racks and torments him more.

How many are his Reflections? yet all to no purpose: he then sees his Error but it is too late to reap any benefit by it: he repents of a great many things, but that repentance adds new force to his torments, because he knows it will do him no good. How does he grieve for not having

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done his duty when he was able? how does he despair of being able to do what he has left undone? he would not reflect seriously on the great Truths of the Gospel while he might have done it to good purpose, now he reflects, and reflects at leisure, but 'tis a Cruel leisure, for all the fruit of those Reflections is despair & rage.

Now he is sensible of all the disorders of his Life, he is now convinc'd of his Error, but its too late. Oh! what must the sentiments of a person consecrated to God be, when he sees his Eternal condition ready to be decided, & remembers how imperfect he hath been in a state which requires so much perfection? to what end did I make such a doo in leaving the world and entring into Religion? Was it to follow the maxims of the world there? God hath called me by his Grace to an Ecclesiasticall or Religious state, have I made good use of that Grace? I quitted all and chose that perfect way of Life, that I might dye in peace by dying like a saint; but

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(wretched Creature that I am) did I consider that an happy Death is the consequence of an holy Life? How often have I taught others this doctrine? O! why have I made no better use of what I taught? How have I been distracted in prayer? how many Masses and Communions have done me no good? how often have I confess'd my sins without leaving them? how many graces have I rendred useles? how many good works have I lost for want of right motives? O my God! why have I taken so much pains to lose my selfe? have I left my Relations? been insensible to their tears and all their caresses? surmounted so many difficulties that I might secure my salvation? And, by loving my ease too much, by setting my heart on trivial matters which one would have been asham'd of in a secular state, I have been a lukewarm Religious; I am now on my death bed torn with remorse, oppress'd with fear & trouble, and having cause to doubt positively of my salvation. Oh! 'tis terrible to pay so dear for such a Death.

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And indeed what else can be the consequence of a careless Life? when we come to consider seriously as we shall certainly do then, that the least grace we have abus'd was sufficient to convert an infidel, & yet so many of them have ve not made one good Religious, or good Christian. When we shall discover a multitude of faults, which we took no notice of before, or which through the violence of our passions, and our indifference we took for small ones, but which now appear to be great sins. What comfort can an imperfect Religious find then? Will he seek it from the saints of his Order? he hath dishonour'd them by his conduct. Will he seek it in his Rule? he has not observ'd it. Will he hope to find comfort in God? he hath offended and incens'd him by serving him so ill, after having receiv'd so many favours from him.

How dismall must his apprehensions be after an irregular Life? when he reflects, I have but a few hours to live, If I be out of the state

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of Grace I am lost for ever ; and I have not only some reason to fear that I am not in the state of Grace (which fear the greatest saints have) but cause to doubt positively that I am not.

In this extremity all that he hath heard of judgment , of Hell , & Eternity come afresh in his mind & affright him in a terrible manner. 'Tis wonderful that he who some few days ago was full of doubts and uncertaintys , is now fully convinc'd of the truths which he was then so unwilling to believe. Behold his fears , see how he trembles and quakes at the thoughts of Death & judgment.

We sometimes meet with men who turn the most serious exercises of Piety into Rallery , and call the exactness of those fervent souls who are punctual in performing the smallest dutys of their station , preciseness and weakness. Let these men who imagine they have reason to censure and act thus , continue to think so at this hour , and maintain their character of wits to the last if

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they can. If they were in the right , let them please themselves now with calling exactness , and devotion , preciseness , and scrupulosity. They have made a false conscience to themselves , & under its shadow they lull themselves in a false security , let them now maintain that imaginary systeme. Alas ! 'tis the remembrance of these very things that now drives them to despair.

While we are in health , our passions blind us , ill examples seduce us , we are charm'd with present objects , the hurry of business takes us up , and we industriously avoid serious Reflections on the Truths of Religion , even our Faith is halfe dead , stifled by the corruption of our manners , but at the approach of Death it revives to terrify , & distract us , like the Faith of the Devils , it makes us tremble but do's not convert us.

Every body is convinc'd that when Death comes we shall repent our neglect of mortification , our worldly voluptuous Lives , our ha-

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ving done so very few good works, and having liv'd no better, and yet which is exceeding strange, after all these reflections, after being fully convinc'd of them, how few take pains to amend their Lives? My God! how long shall we make these useful rections, and yet live so unlike Christians?

Death makes us see clearly; then our prejudices, and prepossessions vanish; formerly we saw but were not sensible of the vanity & emptiness of every thing in the world, but now we both see and feel it and wonder at our stupidity in finding it no sooner, and in not discovering our double want. We find we were deceiv'd and at the same time find to our unspeakable and speakable anguish that we are ruin'd by that Error, and that we cannot recover what it has made us loose.

A Dead man is indeed a mournful, but an useful sight, very proper to disabuse us, and to alienate our affections from the pleasures of this Life; the most accomplish'd man in the World inspires horror

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when he is dead, immediately all is silent, the Corps is cover'd, the Curtains drawn, and every body retires: where is now his beauty and good miene? where is his agreeable humour? what is become of all his projects & great fortune? you see what is the end of all. But what is become of his soul? & what must be done with this corrupted body, which begins already to grow offensive? Notwithstanding all its greatness, notwithstanding all its charms, though the most Lovely in the world, every body fly's it: Husband, wife, Children, Relations, Friends, neighbours, servants, are all striving to be rid of it: those who lov'd it best are most desirous to have it carried away, and most uneasy to hear it spoken of; Its nearest and best friends hire men to throw it to the worms, they make hast to nail it up, they hide it in the ground, and we cannot without horror think of its condition a few days after.

You are forgot as soon as bury'd, every one returns to his business,

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your Friends seek other Friends ; take new measures , and hardly think any more of you. They concern themselves no more about you then if you had never liv'd , no body fears your anger nor desires your favour , they often undo all you had done , within a little time you are not so much as talk'd of.

At your Death indeed some teares may possibly be shed by your Relations and Friends , for the loss of some pleasure or advantage which they expected from you : teares are common , but the greatest part of those teares are only grimace : they will soon be comforted ; especially if they gain by your Death , & any part of your Estate falls to them. We may guess what others will do for us , by what we have done for others after their Death. Our grief for a friend and Relation has been soon appeas'd , and though they were so wretched as to have ruin'd their souls for our sakes , have we thought our selves much oblig'd to them ?

After all this can we make any

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great account of the world and its pleasures ? 'Tis indeed very surprizing that we think so seldom of Death , but tis much more surprizing that we can think once of it , and not be converted. How many live as if they were sure they should never dye , & were to dye more then once ? as if they should lose nothing by dying ill , or as if they could recover that loss after Death ? Is not this our case ? And what will our thought , be on a Death Bed , when we call to mind the reflections we now make , if we reape no benefit by them ?

SECOND POINT.

Consider how happy a thing it is to dye when one has liv'd well ; Death is the punishment of sin , it can therefore be a real trouble only to those who are defil'd with sin : It must needs be a subject of great joy and pleasure to those who have led a virtuous Life. How can they dye unhappily ? since they dye saints.

The Death of a Righteous man saith the Prophet , is precious befo-

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re God ; & consequently dear to him , for one alwayes esteemes and takes care of what is precious. 'Tis no matter to a good man to dye destitute of all humane aid, tho he dye suddenly , he never dyes unprepared , God takes a peculiar care of him , he dyes happily because his Death is precious in the sight of his God.

Every thing ought to contribute to his consolation ; how great must his joy then be , when he reflects that he has liv'd like a Christian , & led a penitential Life ? The sight of what is to come will most certainly alleviate the pains of his present condition.

He is now got over all the difficulties in the way to heaven ; fasting , mortification , labours , austerity , pennance , all is over. What a satisfaction is it in Death to know that he hath done all the good that was required of him , and avoided the ill which he might have done ? especially when he thinks on the remorse of Conscience which would have tormented him if he had done otherwise.

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The longest Life seems then but a moment : from the Cradle to the Tomb ; what a satisfaction must it be to a dying Christian , that instead of omitting he has done his Duty ? what would the greatest fortune avail me , says the dying man , what good could powerful friends do me now ? If I had spent my time in pleasures , and follow'd the maxims of the world , of what use would they be to me now ? I therefore condemn now , and will condemn to all Eternity the maxims of the world ; all the Friendships on Earth cannot deferr my Death one moment ; I am for ever banish'd from all Company , all the pleasures of the world are not able to moderate one of my least Pains , and if I had fixt my heart on them I should now have nothing left , but the regret of having weary'd my selfe for my own ruine. He applauds himselfe for having been so wise as to condemn those vanity's which would leave him now , whether he would or no , if he had not left them. 'Tis sweet , tis comfortable at the hour

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of death, to think that one has left them.

His great business was to save his soul, to make sure of an happy Eternity, if he had been successful in every thing else and had not secur'd his salvation, he would have done nothing; he was in danger of not doing it; and what would become of him if he had not? He trembles with fear at this thought, but having by the grace of God apply'd himself chiefly to that great work, the same thought fills him with comfort.

Let us suppose that a man has taken a long journey about an important business on which his fortune, His honour, and his Life depends; that he comes just time enough to have audience of his Prince and to justify his conduct, and finds that if he had staid an hour or two longer he would have come too late, have lost his cause, and been condemn'd to Death. How glad is he that he did not trifle away his time upon the road? But if by his diligence he not only sav'd his life,

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But gain'd an Estate, honours, and dignities, and became his Princes favourite, would he repine because he had miss'd some little pleasures, & neglected some conveniences, which he might have found in the way if he had stay'd for them? And by staying for which he knew several who came on the same business with him, had lost their cause and their Lives? remembrance of past dangers gives us real pleasure and we delight to talk of them, so the difficulties we have gone through for the love of God, will be very sweet to us at the hour of Death.

Did it ever come into a mans thoughts on his death bed, to regret that he had not diverted and pleas'd himself enough in the world? We very often repent the having pleas'd our selves too much; we regret the time we have thrown away in vain & worldly diversions, while we neglected mortification Alas! are not all our Lives full of nothing else but these very things of which we repent when come to dye?

Did ever Religious man at the

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hour of Death, repent his having willingly and meritoriously left his Relations, his wealth & the world which he must now leave whether he will or no, & gain nothing by his leaving it? an imperfect Religious will repent of his imperfections, but not of his being Religious.

The thoughts of Death terrify the stoutest, & make the wicked tremble, but they fill the Saints with joy. He is A good man says S. John Climacus that do's not fear Death, but he is a Saint who desires it. Then it is that those who have lov'd their Redeemer find a mighty sweetness in receiving the Viaticum, being able to say, come Lord Jesus my heart is ready.

A crucifix must needs be welcome on a Death bed to a man, who has born the Cross all his Life and liv'd by it. With what pleasure do's he hear himselfe invited to leave the world which he values so little, and to take possession of the New Jerusalem after which he has sigh'd like a Prince recall'd to his throne:
like

Proficiscere
anima Chri-
stiana de hoc
mundo.

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like a valiant soldier whom his sovereign sends for, to come and receive the reward of all his fatigues and combats.

Tis true the sight of his sins may justly make him fear, but the view of the Crucifix, the prayers of the Church, the assistance of the Saints, and especially of the Queen of Saints, & of Jesus-Christ himselfe, inspires him with confidence in the mercy of God, which no temptation or trouble is able to disturb.

The sight of his good works makes him confident but not vain, being persuaded that the divine goodness who has guided him by his grace during this Life, will not leave him in this last hour, his tenderness & devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and the remembrance of her past favours will afford him no less joy and comfort. This fervent soul lov'd his Saviour and long'd to be with him, and now rejoyces in expectation of that happy moment which will unite him to that dear Saviour for ever. What a sweetness do's he find in pronouncing the name of Je-

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sus, whom he lov'd with so much
tenderness, & fervour?

What a difference is there between
the death of a Saint and the death of
a wicked man? a difference that is
seen even after their Death. The
Corps of the former inspires veneration:
not with standing the natural
horror we have for dead Bodys,
and for every thing about them, *so*
that we are not unwilling to come
near them, neither the body of a
Saint nor any thing about it frights
us: we are not afraid to enter into
the Chamber where it lyes, we are
earnest to get something that belong'd
to it, we kiss it, we strive to touch
it: his death is not only agreeable to
him but to us to; such is the power
of Holiness that it takes away all the
horror of a Corps and renders it venerable,
and precious. We are all
charm'd with the Death of a Saint;
Is it not then very strange that our
desire to dye like him do's not excite
us to live better.

We are all ready to say with the
Prophet, Let me dye the death of
the just and let my latter end be like

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his: But to what purpose is this
lazy wish while we will not imitate
his Life? Are we ignorant that the
satisfaction which the Saints find in
Death is the ordinary fruit of the holiness
of their Lives? we should have
liv'd like them, in a continual mortification
of our passions, in an entire
renouncing & contempt of the world,
an uninterrupted practise of all Christian
virtues, and an exact performance
of the duty's of our station.

What is the reason that we take no
more care to prepare for Death,
seeing there is nothing of so great
importance, that all depends upon
dying well, and that if we dye ill
we can never repair our loss? oh!
'tis a wretched thing to be reduc'd in
the last moment of our lives to unprofitable
regrets.

Tho you were the greatest admirer
of the world, thou you were never
so fond of it there is no more world
for you when you are once dead.
what do you carry away with you?
what reward do's the world give you
for having been so long its slave?

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what vexation, regret, and despair for having serv'd it? They are truly wise who leave the world first; who do not stay till it leaves them, but despise it, before it despises them.

Tis a sad spectacle to see a man carried out of a great house which he had newly built or purchas'd, & into which he never must return more. All his riches, his goods; and whatever he had in the world is now in the possession of another. Where are all those great men who made such a bustle in the world and appear'd in such splendor? They are gone, they are nothing now, and the world who considers men no longer than they are useful, thinks no more of them: they are in their graves, their flesh putrify'd, their bones calcin'd, their whole body turn'd into dust. How little do we think of those who liv'd before us, unless it be to blame their actions or publish their faults, And this is all the recompense we are to expect even from those whom we have most oblig'd. With what satisfaction would men dye, if they did

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for God, but the hundredth part of what they do for the world to no purpose?

My God! what benefit shall I reap by these Reflections? what thoughts, what anguish shall I have upon a death bed if these considerations do not make me fruitfull? Am I so fully persuaded that there is no solid satisfaction but in thee? and shall I seek it any where else, thou onely canst make me happy both in Life and in Death?

The Saints were wise, hated themselves and kept their body's in subjection, never sparing them while they liv'd, why then do not I endeavour to be wise after their Example? They applaud themselves for having liv'd a mortify'd and holy Life in opposition to the maxims of the world. My God! what good will these pious reflections do me if I defer my Conversion any longer? I give thee hearty thanks for affording me this time to prepare for death, I know that I must begin by an holy Life, and I am resolv'd to delay no longer, but begin this very moment.

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OF PREPARATION
FOR DEATH.

SECT. I.
OF THE NECESSITY OF
preparing for Death.

ALL the world agrees that nothing is of so great concern as Death; that it is the most difficult thing in the world to dye well; that we can never recover our selves if we dye ill; yet there is hardly any thing for which men make so little preparation as for Death.

If we could dye twice our imprudence would not be so great, we might have some hope to reparaire our fault, by expiating a wicked Life and an unprepar'd Death together. But we can dye but once, and we know that an Eternity of happiness or misery depends on that once.

We are not onely bound to live well (saith an Eminent servant of God) but much more to dye well for the most pious Life will avail

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nothing if it be not follow'd by an holy Death. Have we labour'd for Heaven? have we lead an holy Life? we are so much the more concern'd to dye holily that we may not lose the fruit of our pains. 'Tis true an happy death is the ordinary fruit of an holy Life, but 'tis no less true that if we dye ill we lose all the merit of the most Exact Life, and all those merits cannot secure us an happy Death.

Whence comes it then, that we take no more care to prepare for Death, then if we were certain that we should never dye, or that we should dye well, or that we should dye more then once? whence is it that we act as if we could lose nothing by dying ill, or as if it were a very easy thing to dy well?

Can we be ignorant of the danger we run, of acquitting our selves ill of what we never try'd? especially when we don't know how to go about it? Can we be ignorant that it is the hardest thing in the world to dye well? that if we desert our preparation to a death bed, we put it off

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to a time that is too uncertain for so great a work? The work is long, the time is short, and very improper for a business so extremely nice and delicate; so that he who waits for this time stay's till he is a dying to prepare himselfe for Death. We must therefore (adds that holy man) prepare our selves betimes; We should begin this moment, least if we delay any longer we begin too late; or least the time we shall have then, prove as most certainly it will, altogether unfit to prepare to dye in.

If a good Death consisted only in receiving the last Sacraments, in kissing a Crucifix, or shedding a few teares, our imprudence would be more tolerable, but how many with all imaginable helps have dy'd miserably because they never prepar'd for death?

He who dyes well, dyes in the state of grace, he dyes truly penitent, which he cannot do unless he hates sin above all things in the world; will it be easy for a man who has lov'd and doted on sin all his Life and stays till death tears him by force from the oc-

casions of it, will it be easy for such a man efficaciously to resolve against it? will it be an easy thing for him to make sincere acts of Contrition, of faith, of hope, and Charity, who was never us'd to them? when he is oppress'd with pain and sickness, his soul troubled and disorder'd at the approach of Death, will it be an easy thing for him to regulate his family and his Conscience too at such a time? to make a general Confession which requires so much leisure, & thereby repair all the faults of his past Confessions? Is such a man who scarce knows what he do's, in a condition to dispatch in two or three hours the most difficult work in the world which requires very much time, a perfect tranquility of mind and the greatest application?

If we imagine it easy to dye well and with so little preparation, we must condemn the Saints who took so much pains, who spent Their whole lives in preparation, and yet after all were not free from a saving fear at their last hour. Nay we must condemn our selves for acknowled-

ging that they were truly wise in what they did. We own that we cannot be too well prepar'd for Death ! O why then do we make so little preparation for it ?

Our Redeemer forsook our carelessness in this matter, and therefore he has exhorted us more to this preparation than to any thing else. *Watch* (says he) *for you know not the hour wherein your Lord will come ; watch because you know neither the day nor the hour ; Be always ready* and upon your guard. And to let us see more clearly that this preparation is a sure way to dye well, he adds, blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching, ready to run and open the door as soon as he knocks. This preparation is necessary for all those who desire an happy Death ; and it seems that God the Sovereign dispenser of all Grace, has annex'd the Grace of dying well to the care we take in preparing for it.

This we learn by the Parable of the Virgins ; the Virgins who had been careful in feeding their Lamps,

and had prepar'd them selves before hand to meet the Bridegroom, went in with him to the wedding, from whence the foolish Virgins were excluded because of their negligence & want of preparation.

This truth, that we have need of preparation to dye well, is universally acknowledg'd : 'tis for this reason that we are so afraid of sudden Death ; But what do's this fear produce ? Has it awaken'd and excited us to prepare for Death ? Or do we wait for our last sickness ? that is staying for Death, to prepare to dye.

The wise men of the world are not so negligent in their temporal concerns ; do we our selves act in the same manner ? do we undertake any thing of importance, wherein our interest, our honour, or our pleasure is concerned without taking our measures before hand ? we will not venture to speak in publick or to shew our capacity till we have taken time to prepare our selves for it ; and with what care and diligence do we im-

prove that time? If we are to shew our skill in any exercise we allways take some time for practise: what pains did they take (saith S. Paul) who strove for victory in the publick games? how carefully did they study all the flights necessary for their design? how did they foresee the artifices their adversary might make use of to surprise them? how did they avoid pleasure lest it should enervate them? how temperate were they in their dyet? how great was their chastity for many years together? And shall we who know that our Salvation, that our Eternal happiness depends on the manner of our dying, be less solicitous to learn to do it well? we are then to engage in a terrible fight, dare we venture before we have learn'd to make use of our weapons & how to avoid being overcome? how can we hope for an happy death if we do not learn to dye well, if we do not so much as know what we are to learn?

How long shall we rely on our health, and youth, and on the facility of being assisted on our death

beds? do we know any thing more certainly then the uncertainty of that last hour! who would venture his Estate upon the hopes of a long Life? we may dye every moment, this for ought we know may be the last day we have to live; we see men dye every hour, and yet we defer to prepare for Death, still we put it off to another time: Good God! what time do we mean?

The time of sickness is no time of preparation, we should be ready then. *Be ready*, says our Saviour, he do's not say prepare your selves, but be ready; now common sence will tell us that we must prepare before we can be ready.

What should we think of a Captain of a ship who never enquires whether his anchors and cables be in a readiness and fit for service, till he is just perishing in a violent storm? what should we think of a Governour who neglects to repair the breaches of his Town, and lets the magazines remain empty, till he is close besieg'd and the trenches open'd? Death (says the wiseman) is a dangerous

Esote parati.
Matt. 24. 44

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voyage, we sail from time to Eternity among Rocks and tempests. It is a sudden siege, where our Enemy has shut us up in a moment; and can we think this a fit time to prepare ourselves to fight?

We are afraid that the thoughts of Death will disturb our joy and make us sad; we deceive our selves, the thoughts of Death disquiet onely those who are unprepar'd and unwilling to think of it. After all our endeavours we shall never attain a solid happiness in this Life by any other means, then those which conduce to an happy death. He who has learn'd to dye well, (says a very holy man) has learn'd not only to live well but to be happy, for the thoughts of death are uneasy only to those who have cause to fear they shall dye ill, 'tis the truest subject of joy and consolation to him that knows how to dye well; he who is alwayes ready to dye, cannot be afraid to think of dying.

I could not avoid insisting on the necessity and manner of preparing for Death, because the chief design of this retreat ought to be to excite a

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Christian to prepare to dye happily by living holily.

No practise of Devotion is more universally necessary then this; Every body cannot fast; Solitude and austerities are not equally proper for all sorts of men; but every age, rank, and condition is able to prepare for Death: nothing can be a reasonable hinderance. Let us then examine how we have been hitherto prepar'd; whether we do now prepare? And seeing we are now convinc'd of the necessity of doing it, how will our souls be rack'd with despair when we come to dye if we neglect it?

SECT. II.

OF THE MANNER HOW we must prepare to dye well.

I. **T**He most general and most necessary Preparation is an holy Life; when we begin that, we ought to begin to prepare for death the whole Life of a Christian being indeed a preparation to dye well.

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We are afraid to dye suddenly, but what good will that fear do us if we put our selves under a kind of necessity to dye ill? for how can a man dye otherwise who will not prepare till he is just going to expire?

And indeed what probability is there that a man who has liv'd ill should dye well? that he should be able in two or three days to make reparation for the wickedness of a long Life? When the greatest Saints after a perfect Life of many years, have not yet been out of danger of dying ill. But we hope the we shall have time; what time? A time that is no time for us, a time of which we can make no use, a time when the time of mercy is past.

But we trust in the grace of God, and thus we hazard all by supposing our selves sure of Grace, which God without any injustice might have refus'd to the most perfect Saints, and the son of God hath protested that they who deferr their confession to the last *shall dye in their sins*. And the Holy Ghost hath declar'd by the pen of the wiseman,

In peccato
vestro morie-
mini. Job. 8.
21.

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that when death seizes you which you put so farr from you now, *when distress and anguish which you did not apprehend come upon you of a sudden, then he will laugh at the sinner he will mock at his misery, when he cry's for mercy he will not answer, and will have no regard to his prayers.*

In interitu
vestro ride-
bo & subla-
nabo vos.
Prov. 1. 26.
Clamabit
ad me & non
exaudiam
vos.
Prov. 1. 28.

Tis true we seldom see any dye ill who have liv'd well, but 'tis much more rare to see any dye well who have liv'd ill.

2. A more particular manner of preparation, and which is most suitable for this day of Retreat, is to do all the Exercises of the Day as if it were the last Day of your Life, endeavouring to put your selfe into such a disposition as you would desire to be in at the hour of Death.

To that end consider seriously at the close of each Meditation, what your thoughts on that subject would be if you were just going to give up an account to God of your whole Life. And particularly examine what it is that would most trouble you if you were now a dying.

Three things usually disturb dying

men. 1. Their neglect of the Duty's of their station. 2. Their frequenting the Sacraments without profit. 3. Their abuse of the means of perfection which they have enjoy'd, & their having, rendered useless the inspirations and graces which they have receiv'd. We should examine strictly this Day (especially during the meditation on Death) whether we have nothing to reproach our selves on these heads; how we have hitherto discharg'd the duty's of our calling; whether we are punctual and careful now? If we are engag'd in the world, do we live in it like Christians, according to our Saviours maxims? If we have the happiness to be Religious, are we exact in keeping our vows and observing our Rule? If we have the honour to be Priests, do our Lives answer the holiness of our Character? In what ever station we are, have we done our duty in it? are we satisfy'd with our condition? And should we not be sorry if we were going to dye, that we have made no greater progress in the way of Perfection?

Do not our frequent Confessions without any amendment, and our reiterated unprofitable Communions fly in our faces? Jesus Christ hath fed us with his precious body and blood, do we grow stronger by that Divine food? what should we answer to that impartial judge if we were now before him commanded to give an account of his blood? Do we say or hear Mass with that piety & Devotion as becomes a Sacrifice which is the holiest act of our Religion? Would a Priest find comfort if he were now to dye in the Remembrance of the sentiments with which he hath so often celebrated? And could he rejoyce before God in having frequently offer'd that adorable Sacrifice?

Have we not made an ill use of those precious Graces which our Redeemer purchas'd for us with his Blood? how many inspirations have we neglected? how many good desires have we stifled? we must give an exact account of all these favours, are we ready to do it if we were to dye this moment? Are we able to

shew that we have improv'd our talents? We know it is not enough to keep them, can we shew that we have augmented them?

These should be the heads of our examination at the end of the Meditation on Death; we should make our Confession as if it were our last, and endeavour to repair what ever we have reason to fear has been amiss in our former. We should do well to make some reflections on the state of our affaires, and order them so as they may not disturb us when we come to dye. In short, we must endeavour to end the Day in such a state as we would desire to be in the last moment, and we must close up all with a sacrifice of our selves, our possessions, our healths, our Lives to Christ, begging him to dispose absolutely of them for the advancement of his Glory, and submitting our selves entirely and freely to Death when ever he pleases. We must then devote ourselves wholly to the Blessed Virgin, & beseech her to stand by us in this difficult time; we must address some prayers to S. Joseph, to

our Guardian Angels who are able to give us very powerful succors, and sum up all our desires with begging the grace of perseverance in some particular prayer as we judge most proper:

3. A third Method is to set one Day a part every year to prepare for Death; to consecrate it entirely to that work, and do that Day what we must do when we come to dye, what we shall then wish we had done, and what we shall not be able to do upon a Death Bed.

The Evening before we must put our affairs in such order that we may meet with no interruption next day: for the work of the Day requires an absolute Retreat and a perfect tranquillity of mind: if we have convenience we should begin with visiting the holy Sacrament, beseeching our our Redeemer by the merits of his Death to give us grace to dispose our selves to dye well. Then we should address our selves in a particular manner to the *Blessed Virgin*, whose protection is so necessary in that last hour, to *Saint Michael*, our good

Angels, S. Joseph and the Saint whose name we bear; we should do well to say the Vespers for the dead, and so close our preparation for the next Day with half an hour of Meditation, on the improvement of Time, the means and Graces which God hath bestowed on us to work out our salvation, and the little pains we have taken for it.

Redde rationem villi-
cationis tuæ.
LUKE 16. 2.

LUKE 13. 6.

The *Parable* in the *sixteenth* of *S. Luke* is proper to be the subject of the Meditation, where the *Rich man* who was dissatisfied with his *steward* requires him to *give an account* of his conduct since he took the charge of his affairs; or else we may choose the other *parable* of the *barren fig-tree* which is already propos'd for the evening before the Retreat.

We are to spend the rest of the Evening in solitude, retir'd from the noise and distraction of the world, wholly employ'd in taking care of our salvation; in making a general Confession of our whole Lives, or of one or so many years as our Director thinks fit. And we must omit nothing that may serve to put our

souls into so good a state that we may have nothing to reproach ourselves, no scruples concerning our past Life; that we may be able to look on the next Day as the last of our Lives & to employ it as we would employ the last.

Let us begin the Day with blessing God who hath been pleas'd to give us yet longer time, and to inspire us with the design of preparing for Death: And prostrate before the Crucifix let us offer up our selves, our health, our goods, our Lives, an absolute Sacrifice to God: submitting our selves heartily to whatever kind of Death he thinks fit to send, & accepting it in satisfaction for our sins & in union with the Death of Jesus Christ.

Then let us meditate an hour on Death, on what we shall suffer, feel, and think then: let us endeavour to become sensible that it is not far off; and to put on such dispositions as we shall have at its approach.

Let us reflect seriously on the rigour of Death, how without any

exception it deprives us of all things; on the condition of our body's in the grave, and how soon we shall be forgotten in the world; how little our Relations, our Friends and acquaintance will think of us, as if we had never liv'd. Let us affect ourselves with the vanity of all that charms us here, with the folly of placing our happiness or our hopes on the Creatures: Riches, honors, pleasures, all vanish & are as nothing at the sight of Death; but above all let us press home the importance of dying well; the danger of dying ill if we do not prepare for it betimes, and that it will be to little purpose for us to put off our preparation to a Death-Bed.

This Meditation should produce sincere resolutions that we will immediately begin to do what when Death comes we shall wish we had done sooner, and what we shall not be able to do if we defer it till then. And because external objects very much contribute to render us more recollected, we may follow their Examples who make their Chambers

as obscure as they can, who have the representation of Death before them, leaving onely just light enough to discern it. Others suppose themselves ready to expire and with a Crucifix in their hands seek all their consolation from that amiable object. Others hang their Chamber with mourning and endeavour by the sight of their winding sheets to represent Death approaching. These funeral objects have a certain mournful air which is capable of making a great impression.

Our Confession must be such as we would make if we were dying; we must omit nothing, we must disguise nothing that may give us any trouble we must lay our souls entirely open, that our Confessor may be as well acquainted with our interior as we are our selves. We must shew him all that passes in our hearts, all that God sees there, and which he will one day expose to all the World if we do not prevent that terrible discovery by a full and entire Confession. Hove all we must be truly contrite, which is the point wherein we are

oftenest deficient.

Say to your soul, that you are working for Eternity, tis not a Ceremony you are about; you are now to blot out all your past sins, to do this work in such a manner that you may be in no need of doing it again were you immediately to dye.

Examine your selfe carefully on these Articles; the restitution of your neighbours goods; the reparation of his honour blasted by your censures; the example you have given; the tepidity and slothfulness of your Life; your Enmity's and hatreds; your want of godly sorrow, of sincerity, and of resolutions of amendment in your Confessions, the sins of your youth; those which your interest hath made you commit; the ill habits in wick you have indulg'd your selfe; the dangerous engagements you would not break; the next occasions of sin which you would not avoid; the darling passion the beloved sin which men hardly ever mortify, & which is the source of all their disorders; your inordinate Lo-

ve of pleasure; your wilful ignorance of the duty's of your station; your abusive and scandalous railleries; the ill use of the Sacraments, of time, of Grace: If you be Religious search into the violation of your vows, your carelessness in discharging the particular duty's of your Calling.

These are the things which do generally disturb us on a Death-bed and make our Salvation doubtful; when restitution, reparation of honour to those we have aspers'd, when quitting the occasions of sin, reconciling our selves to our Enemies precede our Confession, it is the best sign that our sorrow and resolutions are sincere.

We should look upon this days communion as the Viaticum, and imagine that we hear the Priest when he puts the blessed Host into our Mouths, says, *Receive Dear Brether the precious body and blood of Jesus Christ your Saviour, to be your viaticum* in your passage to Eternity. The Acts following the Communion must be suitable to the condition of a dying Christian, which we shall not

Accipe viaticum, Frater, corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi, &c.

be able to make when we are indeed expiring.

Having regulated our Consciences let us then put our temporal affairs in order, as if we were going to dye. *Make your Will* (saith Saint Augustin) *While you are yet in health, While you have your senses free, While you are Master of your Time, & of your selfe.* In your last sickness (continues the same Father) you will be exposed to so many flatteries, importunities, and surprises, that it will, not be your Will, but the Will of those about you. Besides, your time will then be too precious, and too short, to spend any of it in worldly matters: but you must be careful not to forget your selfe while you provide for others; you forget your selfe if you give nothing to the Poor.

Let the remainder of the Day be employed in good works, in a profound solitude and recollection, and in reading some spiritual Book that treats of Death. *Father Colombiere's three discourses* on that subject are admirable, and may be very useful if we peruse them carefully: Or else

we may read the foregoing Meditation on the sentiments which we shall have at the hour of Death.

Let us pass one hour in consideration on the duty's of our private station, especially on those particulars which may trouble us on a Death bed; and we may reap great benefit by being attentive to the prayers of the Church for dying persons, either in the administration of the Sacrament of extreme unction, or in the Recommendation of the soul to God.

It is evident that we ought to debar our selves all manner of conversation during the whole Day; we must speak only to our Director unless we visit some poor sick or dying person, not only to comfort and assist them but also to raise in our selves a more lively image of what we shall be one day.

We must close the Day with a Meditation on Judgment; on the different conditions of a fervent and a lukewarm soul going to appear before God.

The chief fruits of this Christian practise are these; we must be perfectly wean'd from every thing of

Fac Testamentum tuum dum sanus es, dum sapiens es, dum tuus es.

In imitatione blanditiis & minis ducis ubi tu non vis.

which we know Death will deprive us; to which we must add an exceeding horror of all mortal sin, Reformation of our Lives, and a sincere desire to lay up a treasure of merits by the practise of virtue and Good works.

SECT. III.

PRAYERS, AND Ejaculations to help us to dye well.

THe time of our last sickness is the most precious season of our Lives, wherein it concerns us most to improve every moment, and which we are least capable of improving. Both our body's and mends languish on a sick bed, and what we do is out of custom. We are not able to make long prayers nor affectionate meditations, but we may and must make frequent acts of Resignation, Love, contrition, and confidence in God; And how shall we do it, if we never practis'd them? To do them well we must have us'd our

selves to produce them: This consideration has induc'd me to set down some short prayers and fervent Ejaculation, taken for the most part out of scripture or the Holy Fathers; They are proper to assist us in dying well, and may be very useful to a Christian during his sickness if he were acquainted with the practise of them before.

Lord be Whom thou lovest is sick,

a I am sick O my God, I come to thee my only Physician; I am miserable and therefore I fly to thee who art the source of Mercy; I am dying and therefore I have recourse to thee who art Life its selfe. Yes my Dear Saviour, thou art my Physician, thou art the fountain of mercy, thou art the Life of my soul, pity my infirmity's.

b Help O Lord my strength faileth me; my soul is overwhelmed with trouble, and all my bones are broken with grief.

me, Domine, quoniam infirmus sum, sana me, Domine, quoniam conturbata sunt ossa mea. Psalm. 6. 3.

O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thine Anger; be

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Ecce quem amas infirmatur.

Joan. 11. 3.

a Agrotus sum, ad medicum clamo; miser sum, ad misericordiam propitius; mortuus sum, ad vitam suspiro.

Tu es medicus, tu es misericordia, tu es vita, Jesu Nazarene miserere mei. Aug. Soliloq. cap. 2.

b Miserere

Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me,

neque in ira
tua corripias
me. Ps. 17.

Reminiscere
miserationū
tuarum Do-
mine.

Isai. 24. 6.

4 Nunquid
oblivisci po-
test infantem
suum, ut non
miseretur
Filio uteri
sui? & si illa
obliviscatur
suum.

Isai. 49. 15.

6 Tu nosti
omnis meum
quale sit Do-
mine; da mi-
hi illud pa-
tienter ferre,
ut per viam
crucis extol-
lar ad te.

Aug. Med.
ca. 37.

Adauge la-
borem modō
augeas pa-
tientiam.

Aug.

Obsecro,
Domine, fac
miserecordiā
tuā cum ser-
vo tuo, diri-
ge viam meā,
ut cum salute
revertar in
domum Do-
mini mei.

mindful O Lord of thy tender mer-
cy's and pity me.

^a I am quite cast down I suffer ex-
ceedingly but this is my comfort, that
thou my God wilt not forget me in the
midst of my misery; Can a mother for-
get her Child that she should not have
compassion on the son of her Womb?
yes she may forget, but I have thy pro-
mise that thou wilt not forget me.

^b Thou knowest O my God what I
suffer; Oh! do thou give me patience
that I may be able to go to thee by the
Way of the Cross.

^c My sufferings are great but not great
enough; I deserve much severer chastis-
ements; give more crosses, but at the
same time give me more patience; shew thy
mercy O Lord unto thy servant, direct
my Way, that I may at length arrive
at my Fathers House.

My God! if I had a thousand Li-
ves I would devote them all to thee;
Oh! that the Life which thou hast
given me were more pure, and worthy
thy acceptance: but such as it is I give
it thee without any repugnance; since
thou requirest it, I would not keep it
tho it were in my power.

Yes my God! I am ready and wil-
ling to be depriv'd of every thing I lov'd
upon the Earth: & to lay down this
Body which I have lov'd too well.

I accept willingly the hideous state
to which I shall be soon reduc'd, when
I become meat for the Worms, and
am turn'd into rottenness. Oh! how
happy should I be if this destruction of
my Body could repair the injury I ha-
ve offered to the Divine Majesty, by
preferring my body to him, and its satis-
faction to his service?

Not with standing all my pains, I
am ready to suffer greater if it be thy
will O God; My most acute torments
are too slight and short, seeing they are
the last proof I shall ever give thee of
my Love, and of my earnest desire to
please thee.

Tho thou shouldst condemn me to all
the pains of the next Life, tho they
should be never so violent and should
endure to the end of the World, yet I
would submit to them. Glorify thy selfe
O Lord in punishing me; since I would
not honour thee, nor do thy will.

I believe O Lord! all that thou hast
revealed to thy Church, and I firmly

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hope for those glorious things which thou discoverest to thy Elect in Heaven.

I acknowledge O my God! the enormity of my sins; I have committed more then I am able to remember, my soul is grieved that I have served so good a Master, so ill. But all my sins cannot lessen my confidence in thy Mercy's which are infinitely greater then them all.

I trust that not with standing all my guilt thou wilt not suffer me to be for ever miserable, for thou art infinitely good. I am not a fraid of Hell tho I have deserv'd it, becaust my saviour hath purchas'd Heaven for me. I hope in thy Mercy O Lord, and all the Devils in Hell shall never make me relinquish that hope. In spight of them I will sing eternal praises to thee, will adore thy mercy and possess and love the for ever.

O Divine Mother, most holy Virgin, receive your unworthy child, who is now struggling and striving with Eternity, and succour him in this hour of danger.

Oh! Holy Mary, Mother of Gra-

Magna mater, suscipe
Filium cum
tota cernita-
te luctantem.
Just. Lips.

Maria ma-
ter gratia,
Mater mise-

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ce and mercy, defend me from the assaults of the Enemy, assist and help me, now and in my last hour, and receive my soul into thy Arms.

Have mercy O Lord on this wretched sinner, thou who hast so often for given renewed offences, make him partaker thy mercy, now he repents of them.

a I have sinn'd O God! I confess my iniquities, they are more numerous then the sand on the sea-shore but thy Mercies are never to be numbred.

b I repent O Lord my God of all my sins; My soul is torn with grief because I have displeas'd thee; and that which grieves me yet more is, that I do not grieve enough.

c My God! I curse the Day that I neglected to love thee; I curse the Day wherein I offended thee.

d The Lord is my light and my salvation, Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Protector of my Life, of Whom shall I be a fraid?

e Though men should en camp against

quo non te amavi; vñ tempori illi in quo te graviter offendi.
d Dominus illuminatio mea & salus mea, Dominus protector vitæ meæ, à quo trepidabo? Ps. 26.

e Etiam si consistant adversum me castra non timebit cor meum.
Ps. 26. 5.

Si ambulavero in medio umbra mortis non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es, Ps. 22. 4.

ricordiæ, Tu nos ab hoste protege, & hora mortis suscipe.

Da miseri- cordiam mi- sero ac po- nitenti, qui tamdiu pec- percisti pec- catori.

Bernard.

a Peccavi, Domine, pec- cavi & ini- quitates meas agnosco; pec- cavi super a- renam, maris, sed miseri- cordia tua etiam non est numerus.

In orat. Ma- nass.

b Doleo, Domine Deus meus, doleo quod peccavi, & quia parum doleo, ma- xime doleo.

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c Vñ tem- porali illi, Do- mine, in

quo non te amavi; vñ tempori illi in quo te graviter offendi.

d Dominus illuminatio mea & salus mea, Dominus protector vitæ meæ, à quo trepidabo? Ps. 26.

e Etiam si consistant adversum me castra non timebit cor meum.

Ps. 26. 5.

Si ambulavero in medio umbra mortis non timebo mala,

quoniam tu mecum es, Ps. 22. 4.

me, my heart Will not be terrified ;
though I walk in the midst of the shadow
of Death I will fear no evil because thou
art With me.

b Though thou slay me yet I will trust
in thee.

c Mercy shall compass him about that
hopeth in the Lord.

d Lord ! increase my faith ; increase
my hope, increase my Love.

e My heart is ready O God ! my heart
is ready.

f Whether we live or dye we are the
Lord's.

g It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth
good in his sight.

h We have received good at the hand
of the Lord and shall we not also receive
evil.

i We suffer justly O Lord because
we have sinned against thee.

j Justè patimur, Domine, quia peccavimus tibi. Jer. 14. 25.

FEBRUARY AND AUGUST.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Of the importance of salvation.

FIRST POINT. The business of
our salvation is the most important
of all business.

SECOND POINT. The business of
our salvation is our onely
business.

FIRST POINT

Consider that no business is of
so great importance to us as
the business of our salvation ; an Eternity
of happiness or misery depends
on the success of this. All other
affaires are only permitted as they are
subservient to this great Work : If
we lose this, we lose all, for we lose
God who is all good ; & without
whom there can be no good ; if we
fail in this, he is lost to us, and lost
for ever without recovery.

Salvation is our own business.

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every thing else is forreign to us ; in other things we do the business of our Children, our Friends, our family, our Country, or of the Community to which we belong, and not precisely our own business ; every thing else is a business of Time, this of Eternity.

If we lose other business tho of the highest importance we may find a remedy, or if we do not, we shall be no losers provided we succeed in this. The loss of our souls is the only irreparable loss, Eternity its self will not be sufficient to deplore it.

Shall we be able to comfort ourselves with the thoughts that we have been successful in all our other business of no consequence, and have only neglected this, which is the only business of Eternity ? 'Tis no matter tho we live obscurely and forgotten, without friends, or support, and dye poor, provided we secure our salvation. But what will all our Riches and power, all our knowledge and wisdom avail us, if we loose our souls ? Tho all the world should conspire together,

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they will never be able to deprive a man of Heaven & make him miserable to all Eternity : Neither will they be able to make one damn'd soul happy, so much as mitigate his Torments. What will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul, or what can he give in exchange for his soul ?

Is it possible that this business of Eternity is the onely business of consequence we have to do, and that yet we should neglect this most, and lay it least to heart ?

We fancy that our studies, our trade, our diversions, that our visits and conversation are of great importance to us, they take up all our time, we can never find leisure enough for them, we are unwilling to defer them ; but when we should think seriously of our souls, we make no difficulty, of deferring, we imagine it is too soon, & that we shall have time enough, and yet (which is still more surprizing) we are never at leisure to set a bout it.

Certainly we must have odd notions of Eternal happiness, since we

Quid prodest homini si universum mundum lucratur, &c.
Luc 6. 25.

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are so careless of securing it; would we be content to take no more pains, and spend no more time in our study's. and in temporal affaires, then we do in what concerns our Eternal salvation?

If our salvation depended on another could he have so little zeal or charity, as to neglect it more than we do our selves? Tho we know it depends wholly on our own care. What pains do's every man take in his calling? If we have a child to provid for, if we have a design to joyn in partnership with a Merchant, how careful are we to inform our selves, to examine, to advise with our friends; what measures do we not observe; what precautions do we not take; we think we can never be too sure. But are we to spend a little time for salvation, we think a very little too much.

Salvation is the business of Eternity, but it must be done in time; & we have need of all our Time for it; God gives us our whole Life to think of it; he judged it was all little enough, but we imagine it

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may be done in less.

If we spent in working out our salvation, the hundredth part of the Time and pains we throw away in worldly business, we should soon be great saints. This is the only necessary business we can have, and yet we hardly allot a little Time for it, nay we grudge it even that little.

By our proceedings one would think that we believe God our debtor, and oblig'd to us for being saved.

If a man of business or Letters, pass one whole day in acquitting himselfe of the duty's of a Christian, he looks upon that day as lost; But we spend whole months in vain study's, or in worldly business, and call this spending the time well.

Salvation is our great and chief business; now a mans chief business takes up all his thoughts & hardly gives him time to think of any other; & if this succeeds he comforts himselfe for the miscarriage of the rest.

We commonly put off the care of

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our salvation our to our last sickness that is, we put of the business of Eternity, the most important business we have, and which requires all our Lives, to a time when we are incapable of following the slightest business in the world, when we are indeed incapable of any thing.

If God mistaken? who tells us this only is of consequence. Is he deceived in the disposition of his Providence, & in all his care which tends only to this? Is he in whom are all good things, and who is all himselfe, so little to be valued that we can be indifferent whether we lose him or no? Whence is all that weeping, that cruel despair of the damn'd souls, if what they have lost be not worth our seeking? If everlasting misery be so slight a business, why do we tremble at the thoughts of Eternity? And if we believe it so terrible, how can we be at rest while we are so careless about it, And in so much danger?

My God! how many day's of Grace have I abus'd? how many precious hours have I let pass unprofitably?

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Wretch that I am to spend so much Time in doing nothing: But how much more wretched shall I be, if I do not now at length begin seriously to work out my salvation?

What do I stay for? For a proper time? Alas! that time perhaps is already past for me. Do I stay till thou callest me? Thou hast never ceas'd to do it. Oh! how long hast thou sollicitd me to no purpose? shall this reiterated Grace thou givest me now be in vain?

How long shall I spend the best part of my Life in vain amusements which I my selfe condemn; And do I condemn them onely to aggravate my guilt, by losing that time in the pursuit of them which I ought to employ for Heaven?

How long shall I fancy those things necessary, which are of no use for the next Life? whill I neglect only the business of Eternity.

My God how great will my despair and confusion be upon a Death Bed, if I continue to live as I have done hitherto? when all the means and opportunity's I have had of se-

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curing my salvation, when this present opportunity, and the thoughts I now have of doing it present themselves to my memory?

O my God since thou hast not yet punished me, tho I deserv'd punishment, I trust thou wilt not refuse me the assistance of thy Grace, tho I am unworthy of it. Since this is the day design'd for my conversion, the present resolution shall not be like the rest. I believe, I am fully persuaded, I am sensible that there is but one thing necessary, that Eternal salvation is the onely business that concerns me, and I am determin'd to begin this Day to apply my selfe seriously to it.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that our Eternal salvation is not only the greatest, but the onely business we have, to which we ought to apply our selves entirely least we should do it ill. What ever else we call great business is not properly business, at least not ours, they concern others more then us, and we

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labour more for our posterity then for our selves.

We may get others to do them for us, and we may let them alone without being everlastingly unhappy, but we must work out our salvation our selves, and we are lost without recovery if we neglect it. This is that one thing of which our Saviour speaks so often, this is our onely business: onely, because this alone is of such mighty consequence, the success were of of depends on us: Onely, because no other deserves our care; Onely, because it requires all our care, (and because we may do it if we will.)

'Tis equally the onely business of all the world, of the King in the Government of his Kingdom, of the Prelate in the administration of his Diocess, of the Learned in their study's, of the soldier in the Warr, of the Merchant in his Trade, of the Artisan in his calling. 'Tis not necessary for a man to be a King, a Prelat, a Soldier, a Merchant or a Tradesman, a scholar or a man of business, but 'tis absolutely necessary for him to be sav'd.

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Porro unum
est necessa-
rium.
Luc. 10. 42

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In other matters we have always some resource in this Life or in the next, but there is none in this; he who has not done this, has done nothing, and will never be in a condition to do it again: he who is damn'd, is damn'd for ever.

What reception would an Ambassador deserve from his Master, who at his return from his Embassy, should give an account of the great things he had done during his absence, of the friends he had made, the reputation he had gain'd, the riches he had acquir'd & how well he had diverted himselfe, in fine that he had done every thing but the business he was sent to do?

God hath sent us into the world onely to work out our Salvation; this was his sole design in creating us, this is his sole design in preserving us; will he be satisfy'd with our telling him when we come to dye? Lord we have done great things, we have been in great repute in the world, we have got large Estates, we have been instrumental in the salvation of our neighbours, we have neglected

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nothing but our own salvation; we have done every thing but that one thing for which thou hast sent us into the world. Ad yet this is all the account the greatest part of mankind is able to give, because 'tis at this rate the greatest part of mankind live. And if we were now to appear before God, could we give any other account.

Is all this true? is there such an Eternity? is Life given us only to prepare for it? If I loose my soul can I ever recover it? and shall I certainly lose it, if I live as the greatest part of the world do, and as I have done hitherto? shall I wish at my last hour that I had liv'd otherwise? that I had done what I could and what I ought to have done? And will all those things that take me up now, seem vain and trifling then?

My God! do we indeed believe this our great business? the Devils and the damn'd have as good or stronger speculative belief then we, but do we reduce our Faith to practise, which is the science of the Saints.

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Is it possible that other mens business should take us up ? that worldly things , recreations & compliments should have all our Time ; while the business of our Salvation is the least minded as if it did not concern us ?

What are we the better for being endued with Reason if we make no use of it in the business of our Salvation for which alone God bestow'd it on us ? Alas we in a manner wear it out in prosecuting trivial designs, we are proud of it in matters of no moment ; we value our selves upon our prudential conduct and wise Counsels in business ; but we neglect the real use of it , and we act in the matters of Eternity as if we wanted common sence.

And (which is yet more surprising) we are all agreed in the importance of Salvation , and in the vanity of every thing else ; yet we apply our selves onely to seek those vanity's , and are negligent in nothing but the business of salvation.

We are all conceited of our wisdom
and

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and capacity in business ; every man pretends to understand it , we think ignorance in business or neglect of it shows want of sence & breeding ; & that our reputation depends upon it ; but if we neglect nothing but our Salvation , if we live as unconcernedly as if we had no soul to loose , we are so farr from blushing or hiding our carelessness , that we glory in it , and tho we are never so indevout and irregular we pass for very honest men ; and if we understand the world and know how to be successful in it we are accounted wise.

'Tis an affront to tell a man that he do's not understand his business , but 'tis no disgrace to be accus'd of negligence in the business of Salvation ; surely we do not look upon it as our business ; My God ! when did this one thing necessary cease to be so ?

We can loose our souls with all the tranquility in the world , and we are reasonable Creatures in every thing that do's not concern us ; we do not deny that the Saints were truly wise , yet all their wisdom consisted

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in preferring their Salvation to every thing else ; in esteeming it their only business.

Are we wiser than they , that our actions are so contrary to theirs ; they spent their whole lives in preparing for Eternity ; to what end did they take so much pains & spend so much time , for what we pretend to do with so much ease ? Miserable unthinking wretches that we are to allow so little Time for what requires it all.

Have we found a new way to heaven whereof the son of God was ignorant ? or is the price of Heaven fallen ? and is that happiness which cost the blood of Christ to purchase become of less value ?

What are now the sentiments of those famous states men whom we esteem the greatest Politicians ? of those extraordinary men who were always busy in pacifying or troubling the world , which their heads were always full of. Those men of Riches as the scripture calls them who liv'd without thinking on Eternity , and who after an uninterrupted success in

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all their other business , have miscarried only , in this great business of Salvation ? They are not damn'd for laziness and sloth , on the contrary they owe their ruine to too much useless business ; they were so busy that their very sleeps were broken by their Cares , and they have lost themselves by labouring in what did not concern them , by taking too much pains about nothing while they neglected their only real business, And 'tis by this that the greatest part of mankind are lost.

And shall not I increase the number of the lost , if I continue to live as I have done ? what have I done for Heaven ? what have I not done to deprive my selfe of it ? I have been careful of every thing but my soul , and I act as if its ruine were nothing to me. But I trust in thy mercy O my God that the change of my Life shall manifest that my heart is chang'd ; I will save my soul ; the care of my Salvation requires all my diligence , and it shall have it all ; I humbly beseech thee to give me thy grace to recover what I have lost , as
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thou hast given me Time for it; I
am sensible that this is my onely bu-
siness, I am resolv'd to do it, let
thy Grace make me successful.

SECOND MEDITATION.

OF THE MOTIVES
*which we have to apply our
selves continually to the business
of our Salvation.*

FIRST POINT. *The Motives
which are common to all
Christians.*

SECOND POINT. *The Mo-
tives which every one hath
in particular.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider what God has done for
our Salvation; he is earnest and
desirous to render us happy, as if his
own happiness had depended on ours.
Having made us free and masters of
ourselves, what pains hath he ta-
ken, what pains doth he still take to

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gain our hearts? He desires our hearts,
he sollicitates us to give them, he is
importunate with us for them; some
times he promises, some times he
threatens, he leaves nothing undo-
ne to persuade us to love him; he ta-
kes all this pains because he knows
it is in our power to save or damn
our selves, and he earnestly desires our
Salvation.

Did we ever duly consider, are we
able to comprehend the mystery of our
Redemption? where the Almighty
exerts all his omnipotence to shew the
greatness of his Love to our souls,
and with what earnestness he desires
our salvation? Could we ever have
imagin'd that God should become
man to the end that men might be
saved? Yet this he hath done, and
not content with this wondrous mi-
racle, he goes yet farther to engage
us to love him; he passes a Life of
three and thirty years, in poverty and
sufferings, and he subjects himselfe
to a cruel Death. Such a value doth
God set upon our souls that nothing
less than the sufferings, the blood,
the Life of this God and man could

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redeem them ; and shall we think it a small matter to loose them ?

Shall we think that we do too much when God thought nothing too much to purchase our happiness ? Let us rather conclude that we can never do enough. What does he get by our Salvation ? yet what could he do more then he hath done ? Is not all the profit ours ? why then do we do so little for it ?

How many are now raging and despairing for having neglected to do what I may do if I will ? and which if I neglect now, I shall one day feel the same regret as they. Can we have a more powerful motive to excite us to set about it without delay and to pursue it continually ?

Blessed be God we may yet work out our Salvation ; we have yet time ; God offers us his Grace ; these very thoughts proceed from that Grace ; but this may perhaps be the last moment wherein it will be offer'd us. Our Eternal happiness for ought we know, our Predestination may depend on this one important mo-

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ment : I am certain that I may make my Salvation sure at present if I turn sincerely and heartily to God ; I have at least great reason to doubt that if I let slip this occasion I shall never have a nother, and can I wilfully defer one moment ?

Shall the Devil take more pains to destroy our souls then we will take to preserve them ? shall he value our souls at an higher rate then we do our selves ? The comparison is shameful but too true : tho his nature be much nobler then ours, and his pride so great, yet he stoops to any thing that can ruine a soul : he never gives over, the greatest resistance never weary's him, or renders him less diligent in assaulting us ; he cunningly makes use of every little occasion to destroy us. Good God ! must we learn of him how to prize our souls ? and do we stand in need of his Example to excite us seriously to work out our Salvation ?

Is not all that thou hast done sufficient ? must we search for new arguments to convince us of the worth

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of a soul for which thou hast paid so great a price? Thou hast redeemed me o Divine Saviour, I am thine by a double title, and am resolv'd that nothing in the world shall hinder my giving my selfe wholly to thee without reserve.

SECOND POINT.

Consider how much Gods peculiar care of us obliges us to concur with him to secure our Salvation; shall God himselfe act for us as if he had nothing else to do, as if he could not be happy without us? And shall we stand in need of a more powerful motive to excite us to diligence?

How do's his infinite wisdom improve every moment from our births to make us love him? How admirable is the conduct of his Providence in bringing about our Salvation? Do we count it a small Grace that we are born of Christian Parents when so many are born of Infidels. Is it a small Grace to be educated in the bosom of the Church out of which perhaps we should have still

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continued if we had been bred in Error. How great a mercy was it to have a good instructor in my youth, a companion who set me a good example, a good Friend to advise me? We look on these things as common Accidents, but we shall one day see, that the hand of Providence dispos'd them all; We afflict our selves for the loss of a friend, for the death of a Relation, we are quite dejected with Poverty, our want of capacity disturbs us, and we are troubled to find our selves so little considered in the world, while perhaps these very things are the cause of our conversion, and we shall one day find that we owne our Salvation to these seeming misfortunes.

Most men have been in some dangers, or sick & perhaps to extremity; God who saw we should certainly be lost if we dyed then, being desirous to save us, hath given us more time: we have read some pious discourse only to pass away the time, and have found our hearts touch'd by it; how many happy occasions have we met with, which tho wholly un-

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foreseen, were very proper to promote Gods designs in our conversion? One inspiration, one sudden thought, one word spoken without design, is frequently the first occasion of great Conversions.

If we have the honour to be consecrated to the immediate service of God, let us call to mind all the circumstances of our vocation, and we shall find them so many miracles of Providence; that we should come to such a place, at such a time, and in such company; that when we thought our selves most wedded to the world we found our selves on a sudden weaned from it, that the numerous examples of worldings did not allure us, nor the love of our Friends retain us; that we were not discouraged by the austerity's of a life which appeared so terrible, but that we had resolution enough to surmount all these obstacles.

Nothing but grace could inspire this generous resolution to a person weary of the world, tir'd out with Crose and terrify'd with the thoughts of approaching Death: but in

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the heat of youth, when the world appears most charming, when we are most eager in the pursuit of pleasures, when the hopes of a long Life and the prospect of making a great fortune suggest other thoughts, what is a miracle if such a conversion be not?

But whence proceed these pious sentiments at a time when I deserve them so little? whence is it that among so many who would have been better then I, God hath inspir'd me only with this thought? And if others have entertain'd the same sincere desires, & have had much greater merits, whence is it that they are not chosen? how comes it that if they were chosen they did not persevere? that God perhaps hath suffer'd them to fall back that I might take their place?

Add to these distinguishing favours all the inspirations and powerful assistances with which he prevents us daily, and if all these visible proofs of his singular care of us do not prevail with us to love and serve him without any reserve, we must be

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certainly the most ungrateful wretches living, and deserve the severest and most immediate vengeance.

These are great subjects of meditation which require frequent and serious reflexions, they are the sensible effects of Gods particular Providence which continually watches over us. They are the visible marks of his singular Love in preferring us to so many others; and nothing is so capable of exciting in us a lively faith, a firm confidence, an invincible resolution, and ardent Love to him. And yet perhaps there are some who never thought of it.

My God! how do we employ our thoughts? How can we neglect these comfortable & important Truths? surely it would be impossible to delay setting about the great work of Salvation, if we did seriously reflect on what God hath done, and continues to do every day for us.

No wonder the Devil employs all his cunning to prevent our medita-

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ting on these things; he knows how very proper they are to inspire a sincere desire of serving God; but we are inexcusable to pass so slightly over, and be so little affected with these pressing motives to endeavour after perfection in our several stations.

Let us examine whether we have faithfully concurr'd with the Grace of God, and whether we have comply'd with his designs in taking so much care of our Salvation; Let us examine wherein we have been negligent, and penetrated with this wonderful goodness of God who is so desirous to make us Saints, let us defer no longer, let us immediately correspond with his will who seeks our good, and resolve on such measures as will make our Resolutions effectual. Then we shall reap the fruit of this meditation and of this Day's retreat, if we be careful to pursue our Resolutions, and not suffer them to be as so many have already been, without effect.

THIRD MEDITATION,
OF THE SENTIMENTS
*We shall have at the hour
of Death.*

SEE, THE
THIRD MEDITATION,
For the month of January.

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FIRST MEDITATION
OF THE SMALL NUMBER
of those that are saved.

FIRST POINT. *Our Faith
teacheth us that but few shall
be saved.*

SECOND POINT. *Our Reason
convinces us that but few shall
be saved.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that the number of those
who shall be saved is very small
not only in comparison of above two
thirds of mankind who live in infide-
lity, but even in comparison of that
vast multitude who are lost in the
true Religion. There are few doc-
trines of our Faith more clearly re-
veal'd than this; Strive to enter in
at the strait Gate (saith our Saviour)
for wide is the Gate and broad is the
way that leadeth to destruction and

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many there be that go in thereat, but strait is the Gate & narrow is the way that leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it.

And in another place he tells us that many are called but few are chosen even of those that are called; which he repeats in the same terms on another occasion: And the Apostle speaking by the Spirit of Christ compares the Body of Christians to those who run a race where many run but one onely gains the prize, to whom he likens those that are saved; And to let us see that he speaks of Beleevers he cites the example of the Israelites, you know my Brethren (say's he) that our Fathers were all under a cloud, & all passed through the Red sea with Moses, that they did all eat the same spiritual meat: all these miracles were wrought onely for their safe passage to the promis'd Land, yet how few of them arriv'd in it? of eighteen hundred thousand souls that came out of Egypt, none but Ioshuah and Caleb entred into Canaan.

Isaiah compares the Elect to those

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few Olives that are left here and there upon the Trees after the gathering; and to that small number of grapes that remain after the diligent gleaning of the Vineyard.

Besides these examples and comparisons which the scripture uses to convince us of this terrible Truth, we have the examples of all the world: There was but one family preserv'd from the deluge; of five great city's onely four persons were saved from destruction, and we find but one sick man cur'd of the palsey among the crowd of Paralyticks that flock'd to the pool of Bethesda: This dreadful truth which our Lord repeated so often to his disciples gave occasion to that question, Lord are there few that shall be saved? To which our Saviour waving the Question least he should terrify them, answers, strive to enter in at the strait Gate.

This is certainly the most awakening and terrible Doctrine of our Religion, & yet how little are we affected with it?

were I sure that but one of ten thousand should be damn'd, I ought

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to fear and tremble least it should be my case; but alas! among ten thousand perhaps there will hardly be one sav'd, and yet I am unconcern'd and and fear nothing. Is not my security a sufficient cause to fear? Do's it not proceed from the blindness and hardness of my heart? which renders me insensible of my danger, and thereby less capable of preventing or avoiding it.

The news of one ship lost among ten thousand affrights many, every one that has concerns at sea apprehends for himselfe; but though we know that the greatest part of mankind shall be lost, that very few will arrive at the Port of eternal happiness, how little are we solicitous for our selves? and who has told us that we shall arrive there?

If Jesus-Christ had promis'd heaven to all Christians as positively as he has declared that his Elect are but few we could not be more unconcern'd then we are. But do's this security lessen our danger? And will this insensibility render us less miserable? Alas! if we had no other, this very tran-

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quility is a sufficient cause to make us doubt of our Salvation.

We don't think of it; what is it employs our thoughts if Eternity do's not? Do we believe it; can we believe it and not fear it? and how can we fear it without thinking of it?

How can we be unconcern'd at the sight of so great a danger? the greatest Saints were alwayes afraid; Saint Paul himselfe was never exempt from this saving fear, yet we are free from it; for it is impossible to fear truly and not mend our Lives.

We Sacrifice our goods to preserve our selves from shipwreck; a marchant makes no difficulty to throw his most precious wares the fruits of many yeares labour overbord, to save himselfe; but we will rather hazard all than part with any thing to secure us from damnation.

If the infection be in the City every body is afraid; with what earnestness do we seek preservatives? with what care do we shun the best companys & condemn our selves to

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solitude ? and all this because we are afraid to dye. Are we not afraid of being damnd ? we believe that the greatest part of the world will be lost, and yet we are unwilling to spare one day for retreat, we will do nothing to make sure of Heaven.

Do we rely upon our vocation, upon the sanctity of our condition, upon the talents God hath given us, or upon the meanes of salvation which he affords us ? Alas ! remember Saul had a true vocation to the Kingdom, Judas to the dignity of an Apostle, yet Saul was rejected and Judas lost even in Christs family. Solomon the wisest of men hath with all his knowledge left us in doubt of his Salvation ; and an infinite number of Christian Hero's who were exemplary for their Piety during the greatest part of their Lives, have fallen at last. Their too much security hath ruin'd them in the end of their Lives, and they are damn'd with all their pretended merits.

And yet O my God can I be without fear ? This want of saving

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fear should make me fear all things ; I am certainly lost if I be not afraid of being lost, and can I fear any thing so much as eternal perdition ?

O my Dear Saviour who hast redeemed me with thy precious blood, and who art graciously pleas'd to make me sensible of my danger, suffer me not to be lost for ever. My God ! let me not be found among the Reprobates. I confess that I have hitherto walk'd in the broad way, but behold O Lord, I will now go into the narrow way and will strive with all my might to enter into the straight Gate.

Let others run in crowds to Hell, were there to be but one sav'd in this place I am resolv'd to be he ; and I depend on thy grace ; I know it is my own fault if I be not one of thy Elect. I have abus'd thy former graces but I have ground to hope that this shall be effectual : for I am resolv'd let the number of the Elect be never so small I will be one of that little flock whatever it cost me ; And I am persuaded it is thy will as

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well as mine since I could not form this resolution if thou hadst not inspir'd it.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that if our Faith did not teach us this terrible truth our own Reason would convince us of it ; we need onely reflect on what is requir'd of us, and on our manner of performing it, and we shall presently conclude that there will be but few saved.

If we would be saved we must live up to the Rules of the Gospel ; are there many that observe them ; we must profess our selves openly to be followers of Christ ; is not the great est part of mankind ashamed of that profession ? if we would be sav'd we must either actually or in affection renounce the world and all we have in it, and bear our Saviours Cross daily.

The Pharisees had all the appearances of Piety, they were extremely mortified, and their Lives were unblamable in the sight of men ; and yet if our virtue be not more solid

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and more perfect than theirs, we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

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'Tis a great matter to stifle our revenge, it is yet greater to forgive injury's, but this is not sufficient to obtain Salvation ; if we would be saved we must love even those who persecute us. It is not enough to abhor all wicked actions, we must abhor the least ill thought ; we are not onely oblig'd not to cover our neighbours goods, we must bestow our own on those who are in want. True humility which is the essential Character of a Christian will not admit of ambition or vanity ; Tho you labour never so much, if God be not indeed the end of your labour, you will have no thanks for your pains to all Eternity. Be as regular as you please, God is not content with an outward shew ; he requires the heart and that you should serve him in spirit and in Truth ; that is sincerely and uprightly. One mortal sin effaces in a moment all the merits of the longest and best Life ; and one hundred thousand millions

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of years in Hell will not be a sufficient punishment for the sin of one moment?

It is an article of Faith that neither the proud, the covetous, the deceiver, the slanderer, nor the unchaste shall ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; he that enters there must either have always preserv'd his Innocence, or recover'd it by a sincere repentance; and do we find many who offer continual violence to their inclination, without which we can never come there? where is that exact purity? where is that continual penance? that hatred of sin? and that ardent charity which is the caractere of the Elect? what is become of the Primitive simplicity? do's not interest govern? and is not Religion it selfe made subservient to it? is not the General example the Rule of most mens actions? who look upon it as a maxime that we must act like men while we live among men; but we must act like Christians if we will be saved: we must lead a Christian life in the midst of those who have onely the name.

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'Tis likewise certain that the work of salvation is our greatest business; that we are sent into the world for this end alone; that we must employ our whole Lives in it, and that after all we cannot be sure of it; yet how few Christians do indeed make this their great & onely business?

We can never be sav'd without final Grace, 'tis an article of our Faith that we can never merit that Grace, that God might without injustice refuse it to the most perfect Saints; what reason then have we to expect it, who are so imperfect and so lukewarm in the service of God?

These are not counsels onely, they are the maximes of Jesus-Christ; the irrevocable Laws and indispensable conditions of salvation, which is not promis'd to the knowledge but to the observation of them; to so exact an observation, that the neglect of any one damns us to Eternity: Let us now call to mind at what a rate men live, and then judge whether many can be saved. Let

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us examine our selves and see whether we have any reason to hope to be of that little number.

Hear what S. Chrysostom says to the great City of Constantinople; how many (say's he) do you think will be sav'd out of this vast City? (one of the greatest & most populous in the world) I shall terrify you by my answer and yet I am bound to tell you that of so many thousand inhabitants, there will hardly be one hundred saved, nay I doubt even of the salvation of these.

And yet this Imperial City was then as well regulated as any of those wherein we live, full of those we call honest men; its inhabitants were reputed devout, frequented the Sacraments, and liv'd as we generally do: Let this great Saints decision, who would never have spoken so positively without an extraordinary light, give us an Idea of the small number of the Elect.

Is it possible that we can cheat our selves so grossly as not to see that we are running headlong to

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Damnation? and that if we continue to live at our usual rate, our Religion obliges us to believe we shall be damn'd?

And certainly we could not believe our Religion true, if after having laid down such strict Rules it allow'd us to hope to be sav'd in the violation of them; this would be to impose upon the world: but blessed be God our Religion condemns most severely such an irregular conduct, and careless loose Christians will not be excus'd because of their great number.

It is an Article of Faith that unless we be like our Redeemer we cannot be saved; to be like him we must conform our wills, we must hate what he hates, & love what he loves: Are there many who resemble this great pattern? how little do we our selves resemble him? and what will be come of us if we continue so unlike him?

Now adays men content themselves with some outward appearances of Religion, with a shew of virtue; every man makes to him-

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September. selfe a false systeme of Conscience; with which he rests satisfied as to what concerns his Salvation; yet we believe that Heretiks are lost who have their system's too & who are as exact observers of the external part of Religion as we, and have very often all the quality's of meer honest men: what ground have we for this imaginary assurance? have we any new Revelation or particular Gospell? Do we build our hopes upon the profession of the true Faith which Heretiks have not? surely unless we take pleasure to deceive our selves we must own that he who believes little of what he ought to do, is in a much better condition, than the man who do's little or nothing of what he believes.

If believing were sufficient the number of the Predestinated would not be small, if we had liberty to live as we pleas'd we should make no difficulty of believing any thing; but Faith without works is dead; though you believe never so well, you can never hope Salvation if you

neglect to practise what you believe. *March*
The Devils believe more than we, *September.* but their Faith is onely speculative; and woe be to us if ours be no more than speculative.

Are The sublime Sanctity - of our Holy Religion, the admirable example of the Son of God, the shedding of his blood, the efficacy of the Sacraments, the communications of his Grace, design'd onely to make us keep some measures, which serve onely to encourage us to sin more boldly by disguising those faults which are common to us with the Pagans? Were the Saints men of another condition than we are? were they excepted in the universal Redemption of mankind? was not the way to Heaven discover'd in their Time? did they expect any other recompense? how comes it that we are so very unlike them? they resolv'd to be Saints, what do we resolve to be? And can we hope to be Saints without following their Example? what grounds have we to rely on the mercy of God, when we make use of that mercy to him.

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der our Conversion? Jesus - Christ has expressly condemn'd lukewarm souls, yet do's not this tepidity reign among Christians?

Am I convinc'd that the number of the Elect is so small? and shall I do nothing to be of that number? Yes, my God! were there to be but one soul saved, since it depends on my will to be that soul, I am resolv'd to be sav'd.

I acknowledge that I have done nothing for thy service which can make me hope, but my confidence is founded on what thou art doing now for me.

Thy design in giving me this opportunity, & in exciting me to this resolution, was not to increase my guilt: I have no need of any other Argument to convince me that thou desirest my Salvation than this very fear which thou hast imprinted in my soul least I should not be of the number of thy chosen.

I have often rendred my best thoughts useless, but my God I have reason to hope that this reso-

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lution which I now make to work out my salvation with all the earnestness in the world shall be effectual. And because I have had too much experience that these pious designs are easily forgotten, I will begin this moment to turn to thee, & to devote my selfe entirely to thy service, and I rely upon thy goodness for strength to persevere.

Disi nunc
capi, hac
mutatio dex-
teræ Excelli.
Ps. 76. 11.

SECOND MEDITATION.

O F S I N.

FIRST POINT. *Of Mortal Sin.*

SECOND POINT. *Of Venial Sin.*

F I R S T P O I N T

Consider that all the calamity's and misery's that are in the world or have been since the Creation proceed from mortal sin: this is the cause of wars, plagues and Famines, of the destruction of City's by fire, and of men by sickness: Eternal Damnation and Hell

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it selfe are the dismall effects of one
Mortal sin.

How can we comprehend the heinousness of mortall sin? seeing thō the Angels were the most perfect part of the Creation, neither the nobleness of their nature, nor all their perfections, nor their fitness to glorify their maker to all Eternity, nor their being particularly design'd for that end, could exempt them from being plung'd into everlasting flames, for one mortall sin of a moment express'd in a vain thought.

For one act of disobedience Adam was depriv'd of his original justice, of all his natural and supernatural gifts; by this one sin he lost the priviledge of immortality, became subject himselfe, and subjected his Posterity to those innumerable misery's under which we groan: so many thousand yeares are past, and the Divine vengeance is not yet appeas'd, nor will be till the end of Ages; 'tis the fire of this wrath that burns in Hell, and will never be extinguish'd.

The consideration of the terrible

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punishment inflicted on mortal sin is a clear proof that it is the greatest of evils, since God who is goodness its selfe, and whose mercy is exalted above all his works is so very severe against one act of it.

How many persons eminent for virtue full of merits and arriv'd to a great degree of sanctity, are now damn'd for one mortal sin?

If after three or fourscore years of penance after a long Life spent in the exercise of the most heroick virtues, after having wrought miracles; if we commit one mortall sin, all our penance, all our virtues will be counted for nothing, we become Enemy's to God, and objects of his wrath & vengeance.

By the severity of the punishment we may conceive some Idea of the crime, but its enormity, and the hatred which God bears to it are more visible, in the pains he hath taken, and what it hath cost him to destroy it. Those inconceivable mystery's of the incarnation, the nativity, the Life; the passion, and the Death of the Eternal Son were

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wrought onely for the destruction of sin : nothing less then all the blood of Christ could redeem one soul and after all this soul shall be damni'd for one mortal sin : all the flames of Hell, those Eternal flames could never cleanse the least sinful spot.

Can we believe this and live one moment in sin ? and notwithstanding this extreme danger continue to sin and to expose our selves every day to the occasions of committing it ? this is hardly to be imagin'd.

How shall we reconcile our Faith with our practise ? how shall we make our practise and our Reason agree ? we refuse no pains to oblige a friend, we are wonderfully exact in every punctilio of good breeding, but stupidly careless in the important duty's of a Christian Life. We own that most afflictions are the punishments of our sins ; we are all afraid of Hell, yet we are not afraid of sin which is the cause of Hell ; how sensible are we of the smallest loss ? how uneasy, how sad ? and

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often uncapable of comfort ? yet how insensible of the greatest ? of that irreparable loss which a million of worlds can never repair : we sin but we are not sad, neither do we stand in need of comfort.

Tho' we had committed but one mortal sin in all our Lives it would be a just reason for continual humiliation ; it would be a just subject of fear and trembling to the last moment of our Lives. We have sin'd, we are in danger of renewing our sins, we are uncertain of their pardon, how can we be without fear ?

Are we sure that we are in a state of Grace ? or do we hope so, because of our reiterated confessions ? Alas ! who hath told us that our contrition was sincere ? that our sorrow was from a supernatural motive ? how can we be satisfy'd with our purposes and resolutions when we know by experience and by so many relapses how ineffectual they have often been ?

Since God spared not the Angels that sin'd how ought we to tremble who have sin'd after the knowledge

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of their terrible punishment? After
having seen the son of God expire
on a Cross to destroy sin, can I
imagine that God will hate sin less
in me!

My God, & Saviour! who hast
dyed for me which thou wouldst not
do for the fallen Angels; I humbly
beseech thee by the merits of thy
Death to give me that Grace which
thou wouldst not offer them: Give
me an hearty sorrow for all my
sins, and incline my will to answer
thy End in affording me this time
for repentance which thou hast not
given many others, and to begin
immediately.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that venial Sins seem
small onely to those who have little
faith and less Love; they who love
God truly look upon all sin with
horror, and are more afraid of it
than of the greatest misery. A ve-
nial sin is indeed a small sin, but
it is not a small evil: as long as it
is a sin it is a greater evil than a ge-
neral desolation of the whole Uni-

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verse, and therefore the Saints of
God have always judg'd yt all the
creatures ought to think themselves
happy if they could prevent one ve-
nial sin by the sacrifice of their very
beings.

Moses his distrust in striking the
Rock twice cost him his Life:
Five and twenty thousand Israelites
dyed in one day at Berhshebeth
for looking too curiously into the
Ark of God: Davids vanity in num-
bring the people brought a terrible
Plague upon them: two and forty
children were devoured by wild
Bears for mocking the Prophet E-
lisha; and Hezekiah's ostentation
in shewing his treasures to the Am-
bassadors of Babylon could not be
expiated by less than the loss of
those treasures.

Thus God whose wisdom is in-
finite punishes venial sins in this Li-
fe; but in the next where his
justice is not restrained by his mer-
cy, the punishments of venial sins
yield in nothing as to their violence
to the torments of Hell, and this
he inflicts even on those souls

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whom he loves tenderly and who love him above all things.

We shall find one Day that the Death of our beloved Child, the loss of such an estate, such a distemper, the ruine of such a family, and publick calamity's are perhaps now as formerly the punishments of venial Sins. God indeed doth not alway's send visible chastisements, but then he reserves the sinner for severer strokes.

For every venial sin we deliberately committ God withdraws some portion of his Grace, and is the deprivation of Grace a small loss? Venial Sins do not indeed make God hate us, but they make him love us less; they make him stop the course of his bounty, withhold his Graces, and suspend that particular Providence with which he watches over those he loves, & that tender care whereby he preserves them from danger, whereby he either keeps them from Temptations or enables them to overcome them: Venial Sins render a soul languishing and insensibly disgust it

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with Piety, till they have brought it into a lukewarm disposition, the most dangerous state a soul can be in. And God at length grows weary of our ingratitude, and cannot suffer that we should believe that we acquit our selves sufficiently of the infinite obligations we have to him, provided we abstain from offering him the most outrageous affronts, tho' at the same time we indulge our selves in displeasing him every hour.

Which of us would have the patience to keep a servant onely for his honesty, who had no other good quality, who did every thing with reluctancy and by halves, who treated us with disrespect and who never took care to please us, under pretense that it was in things of no consequence? And can we expect that God should suffer a servant whom we would not endure? It is true that venial Sins do not render us Enemy's to God; but it is as true that he who indulges himself deliberately in many venial Sins does not love God.

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Certainly the man that contents himself with barely not being Gods Enemy, esteems his Love but little; the best that can be said is that he is afraid to have God his Enemy; but very indifferent in desiring him for his Friend. The wilful disobliging a Friend upon all occasions is a strange method to make him love us: And I cannot see how we shall be able to reconcile our profession of loving with our practise of wilfully displeasing him.

'Tis no excuse that we offend onely in little things, their smallness renders us inexcusable, because we might more easily avoid them. If they be little things we cannot pretend that we were discourag'd by difficulties, or that the violence of our passions hurry'd us away; it proceeds onely from an indifferency for God whom we serve out of fear, and flatter our selves that we love him because we dread his justice.

No wonder then if God be as indifferent for us, if he abhor our baseness, if he withdraw his favours from such unworthy wretches, and

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refuse to communicate him selfe any more to us. And indeed we can not expect those peculiar favours which he bestow's onely on fervent souls. Thus we run our selves into danger of comitting greater faults, for an habit of venial sins is the high Road to mortall ones; and God is in a manner oblig'd to deprive us of those divine lights, of those strengthening graces without which we can never resist violent Temptations. Hence proceed the surprising falls of many who were at first so reserv'd; they began by allowing themselves little Liberty's, and so by degrees fell into such disorders as before this unfaithfulness they would have trembled to think of. He who despises little things will most certainly fall by degrees: For though venial sins can never be come mortall yet they dispose us for them: if we once content our selves with not losing the Grace of God, we are sure to loose it in a very little Time: these terrible falls startle us, but if we did well consider the disposition in which venial

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Sins put the soul, we should be less surpris'd.

Venial Sins are like the beginnings of a sickness the first indisposition seems nothing at all, and we think it wil easily be cur'd, yet by little & little it undermines our health so that the least excess or unwholsome ayr throws us in to a malignant feavour and from thence in to the Grave.

Though sometimes men dye suddenly, yet their Deaths are usually preceded by some light indisposition which seem'd of no consequence. Thus Venial Sins tho' never so deliberate and numerous, do not kill the soul but they weaken it, and impair its strength, so that it languishes and do's its duty's but by halves, and with reluctancy; every thing hurts it, Sacraments, Good works do it no good. How can a soul in this condition remain long in a state of Grace being thus expos'd to so many impending dangers, depriv'd of its support and strength, & every moment running its selfe farther in to danger.

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This made an Eminent Saint say that we ought some times to be more careful to avoid small sins than great ones: And 'tis the apprehension of not stopping here, 'tis the fear of being depriv'd of strengthening grace in punishment of those little infidelity's, & there by being left a prey to temptation, that makes the Saints so incapable of comfort after a venial Sin.

After all, is a Venial Sin nothing? is it of no consequence? what then shal we count something, if it be nothing to offend God? we think it a matter of consequence not to disoblige a friend, we think it a matter of consequence not to be rude to any man so much as by mistake and shall we think it a slight thing deliberately to displease God? shall we think it nothing to lessen his kindness to us? to stop the channel of his Graces? to diminish the fervour of charity & to render all the Sacraments of no use shall we think our selves affronted by a rash word, & shall we think that fault little which offends God?

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which draws his indifference on us tho' not his hatred? which will make us loose those inestimable Treasures that are worth more than all the riches in the world? shall we make nothing of disposing our selves to fall in to mortal Sin, & of indulging our selves in those irregularity's which are often the ginning of the Reprobation of many who appear'd eminent for Piety?

Consider what are our thoughts of venial Sins? have we fully resolv'd in all our confessions to mend them? for it is much to be fear'd that by frequent confessing the same venial Sins we too often render our confessions at best useless for want of contrition. Let us no longer look upon them as little things, there are but few things that we ought to fear so much; Let us examine our selves strictly, & accordingly regulate our practise.

THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE SENTIMENTS

*we shall have at the hour
of Death.*

SEE, THE

THIRD MEDITATION;

For the month of January.

FIRST MEDITATION
*THAT WE OUGHT NOT
to delay our Conversion.*

FIRST POINT. *If we delay
our Conversion, we thereby put our
selves into an evident danger of
being never converted.*

SECOND POINT. *If we delay
our Conversion, we thereby put our
selves under a kind of necessity
of being never converted.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that there is no Chri-
stian who has not some time
or other desir'd to turn sincerely to
God; there are certain happy mo-
ments wherein by an inward light
we discover on a sudden so many
faults in Creatures, we find so
little solidity in every thing on the
earth, and are so disgusted with

what seem'd most charming, that
we cannot avoid confessing that to
neglect the service of God is the
highest degree of madness.

Our Reason is convinc'd but our
passions are too strong, and we
have not resolution enough to op-
pose them; therefore self-Love finds
an expedient to flatter both; it sa-
tisfy's our Reason by persuading us
to resolve on Conversion, and
pleases our flesh by engaging us to
defer it and to retain our former
habits, but here it apparentiy de-
ceives us for this delay puts us in
to an evident danger of never being
converted.

Time, Grace, and a willing mind
are necessary to Conversion; if we
put it off but for one day, how
can we promise our selves that one
day? if we have that Day, are we
sure that we shall be more willing
to improve it? And who hath told
us that we shall then be assisted
with amore efficacious grace than
that which we have hitherto resi-
sted?

Is any thing more uncertain than

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Time ? how many have been surpris'd by Death while they were deliberating ? And would it not be a dismall thing to dye full of designs for a future Conversion ?

We think it is not now a fit Time to quit our dangerous conversations, to avoid the occasions of sin, to reform our Lives and to live more retir'd & more like Christians : alas ! what time would we have ? we are for staying till the heat of youth is past, till age and experience have disabus'd us 'as to those trifles which take us up now, and then every thing will contribute to our conversion.

Thus the greatest part of mankind argue about their projects of conversion, for no man pretends to dye unconverted, but do they reason well ? do we find many of these Resolvers converted before they dye ? We accept (saith S. Augustin) their pennance who defer their conversion to the end of their Lives, but we make no great account of such conversions. No my Brethren (adds that great Saint)
Idare

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I dare not deceive you and therefore must declare that we make no great account of them.

We refuse to be converted now, what grounds have we to believe that we shall be more willing here after ? If we find difficulties now, we shall meet with greater then they increase with our passions, which will then, be stronger, and instead of youthful amusements which take up our Time now, we shall then find that multitude of business will be a greater hindrance. Do not flatter yourselves that you may be converted at any time; who has told you that you shall at all times be capable of conversion ? If we refuse to be converted when God invites us now when our ill habits are but weak & few, can we reasonably expect to be able to do it here after, when they are multiply'd and grown inveterate ? God will be weary of waiting; his solicitations will diminish as our resistance of his Grace encreases; so that we are forc'd to own that we run the greatest hazard in the world by delaying, and yet

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we are not afraid to venture.

Was it ever heard that a condemned malefactor was unwilling to receive his pardon, & desired it might be deferred to another Time? God offers us his Friendship, he renders his pardon to us, and we are unwilling to have it yet; we desire him to stay till we are in humour to receive it. He solicites us and we bid him keep his Love for another Time; would we treat the last of men thus, and how should we resent this usage our selves?

Every man promises him self Time for Conversion if Jesus - Christ had promised us with an Oath that we should have notice of his coming, we could not live in greater security than we do, tho' we know that he hath sworn the direct contrary.

Did ever any Merchant when he had found an opportunity of recovering all his losses put it off to another Time? and defer the securing his fortune till the next day? Would not we think a man distracted who being dangerously sick should

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desire his Physician not to visit him till five or six Day hence?

Am not I with all my pretensions to wisdom this distracted man, when I delay my Conversion one Day? I am out of favour with God, my soul is dangerously ill, the most efficacious remedies do me no Good, my sickness encreases, God solicites and beseeches me to be cured, he desires only my consent, and I refuse his offer.

Has not the Son of God prevented all our excuses and all our false pretences by declaring that he will come when we are not aware of him? this is not only the Counsellor of a wise and knowing friend, it is the decision of the Lord of Life and Death who knows the time in which he designs to call us. Let our designs and projects be never so well laid, Death will come when we least expect it.

Did we ever see a man dye, were we ever dangerously ill our selves without resolving to turn to God? and yet we are still unconverted. Our last sickness will put

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us on the same resolutions, but how can we be sure they will be more sincere than the former, and why should we think that God will accept them?

Men tremble when they find themselves in danger of losing their Lives or Estates; is it nothing to loose our souls by remaining unconverted? If the loss of a soul be so small a matter why did Jesus-Christ do and suffer so much to redeem it?

My God! thou desirest not the Death of a sinner, thou desirest his Conversion; so that it is my own fault if I be not converted. Am I unwilling? and how can I pretend to be willing if I put it off from day to day?

One would think it were a great misfortune to be wholly thine, since men give themselves to thee, as late as they can; I am terrified by other dangers, is not this of being lost for ever a much greater danger?

It is resolv'd O my God! it is resolv'd, I will defer no longer; but tho' I am willing; it is thou

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alone that must convert me; Do it and then I shall be truly converted.

Converte
nos & con-
vertemur
Thren. 5. 21.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that by deferring our Conversion we are not onely in danger, but under a kind of necessity, of never being converted: when the Scripture exhorts us to seek God while he may be found, it teaches us there is a Time when he will not be found; what then must a man expect whom God hath sought in vain several yeares together and who has been insensible to all his Goodness?

Do we thinck our selves too young to be devout, and that we ought to stay till we are older, and then be converted? This is as much as to say that we have not sufficiently offended God, that when we have abus'd his goodness more and driven our ingratitude as farr as we can, we wil then begin to serve him. Will he accept of our service then? Tis true; God will

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never refuse a Sinner that is really converted, but the difficulty lyes in being converted; seeing we will not be converted now when God desires it, can we be sure of doing it when we shall have all the Reason in the world to doubt whether he continues to desire it.

Lue. 14. 16.

Could the Apostles reasonably expect a second call from Christ to leave all and follow him, if they had delay'd till next day to obey the first? could they expect to have more courage next day? they who were *invited to the supper* in the Gospel were but twice invited and excus'd themselves but once upon very plausible pretences, which were yet sufficient to exclude them for ever from the Feast and to seal their Reprobation.

The Difficulties and obstacles we meet with now, and which we pretend are already invincible will augment in number and force every day; we say we cannot be converted now, we shall be less able here after; the spiritual helps of reading and meditating on the great Truths

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of the Gospel, the Counsels of a wise Director, the frequentation of the Sacraments have no effect on us now: upon what then do we build our hopes of Conversion? we would not yield at first when we were touch'd with those truths, much less shall we yield our selves when we are grown insensible.

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We accustom our selves to every thing in time, the best advice and the most terrible Truths, will make no impression on our affections and less on our hearts; like those who are continually about dying people we shall by degrees loose all sence of what terrify'd us at first. By frequent slighting the thoughts of Hell, we shall become little afraid of it; Do we expect to be disabus'd then? Alas! we are already convinc'd of our danger; for why do we intend to turn to God at last, if we be not persuaded that we are in a dangerous state?

Suppose a longer experience should make us see our Error, and wean us from the false pleasure, & the false Liberty of the world, so that

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we cease to esteem them, we shall still retain them out of custom, interest, obstinacy, or inclination. Though we glory no longer in being Libertins, in following the maxims of the world & in not being devout we shall insensibly continue so because we are us'd to it; Unless we are absolutely resolv'd to be deceiv'd, we can not propose to our selves to overcome so many multiplied obstacles all at once; when with a greater assistance of grace than we can expect, & with less guilt we have not courage to enough to conquer one single Sin.

We persuade our selves that at the hour of death, the sense of approaching danger will make us turn to God; but how can we rely upon a Conversion to which we are excited onely by the presence of Death, and which must therefore infallibly be the effect of Fear?

And for a clear proof that those Conversions are seldom sincere how many have we seen truly converted after a great Sicknes? besides it is

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an Article of our Faith that the Son of man will come at an hour when he is least expected, so that altho the Death of the greatest part of mankind be not sudden yet it is unforeseen; and Jesus - Christ hath declar'd with an Oath that he will be inflexible to all the prayers of those who expect their last hour to turn to him, so that we must either believe the Son of God mistaken, or that he had a design to deceive us, or we must believe that the sinner who deferrs his Repenrance to a Death-bed will dye impenitent.

Our Saviour do's not Say that we shall continue obstinate to the last, that we shall not beg him to forgive us, or that we shall not have Time, but I foretell you (saith he) that you shall dye as you have liv'd.

But we must all wayes hope; true but that is no Christian hope which is contrary to our Faith.

The merits of our Redeemer might indeed save us, if his word

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and his Gospel had not already
condemn'd us.

Can we imagine that the great
work of Eternal Salvation which is
the work of our whole Lives, and
for which Christ himselſe judg'd
no leſs time neceſſary, can be done in
a few hours? that it can be done
well in thoſe laſt moments? After
all this: can we believe that when
we have delay'd it from one day to
another, we may eaſily do it not
withſtanding we put our ſelves
under a kind of neceſſity of not
doing it at all?

Where Eternity is concern'd we
ought to hope only on ſolid
grounds; The only foundation of
hope is the word of God, and
yet we hope againſt this expreſs
word.

How long hath God ſollicit'd
us to be converted? & yet how
long do we continue to reſiſt his
grace?

If we had no other motives than
the aſſurance that Grace is offer'd
us, that God is ready to receive

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us, that we may be this very mo-
ment if we will in the condition
we ſhall wiſh for, when we come
to dye the want of which will
then drive us to deſpair; do we
need any other to make us re-
ſolve?

Would a damn'd ſoul delay
one moment if he had any time,
and the means of Conversion that
I have? thoſe wretched Souls
were once what I am, have not
I reaſon to fear that I ſhall be one
day what they are? they deferr'd
their Conversion and are damn'd
for it, am not I in danger of being
damn'd for the ſame delay?

'Tis ſtrange that we can put off
our Conversion to the laſt; that is, to
do the moſt important and difficult
work in the world: we wait for
a ſeaſon wherein we ſhall be whol-
ly incapable of any thing; wherein
a man would be thought mad or at
leaſt imprudent that ſhould talk to
us of buſineſs. Is a ſick or dying
man in a condition to talk of bu-
ſineſs? And yet it is to this time
which we our ſelves acknowledge

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to very unfit for the most trivial affaires, that we deferr the greatest business in the world, the business of Salvation, & of Eternity.

How can we think of being converted one day and yet deferr it though but to the next day? The design of being converted implies that we believe our Souls in danger, that we are sensible of want of Love to God, that we do not serve him faithfully. That we are out of his favour, and that we dare not dye in the state in which we live. He who deferrs his Conversion wilfully lives in a continual danger, by which so many perish every Day, he refuses to love God, & is content to be out of favour with him: he resolves to live in a State wherein he is afraid to dye, and this after serious reflection, and after several designs to change his Life; he resolves to persist in enmity to God at the very time when God tenders him his Grace and presses him to accept his Friendship. Can any Christian, can any rational man make this reflection

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& afterwards deferr his Conversion one moment.

Alas my Dear Saviour! I am but too capable of doing this; these reflections and an hundred more will be to no purpose if thou dost not convert me; Oh! do it for thy mercys sake; as this is the day wherein I resolve to be converted, so let it be the Day of my perfect Conversion.

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SECOND MEDITATION.
OF THE GOOD USE
of Time.

FIRST POINT. *That Time is very precious.*

SECOND POINT. *That the loss of Time can never be repaired.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that nothing is so precious as Time every moment is worth an Eternity; that the glory of the Saints, the Eternal joys of

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heaven which Christ hath purchas'd for us by his blood are the reward of the good use we make of our Time.

Time is so precious that the smallest part of it is worth more than all the honours and Riches in the world, & tho we employ but one moment to get all those honours and Riches, if that be all we gain by it, God who judges righteously will look upon that moment as lost. If a damn'd Soul were master all the Kingdoms of the Earth h: would give them all, and all its Treasures for one of those precious minutes which he formerly spent in folly and which we loose every Day.

Comprehend if you can what Grace and the possession of God is; this Grace, this God are the price of our Time, which is given us onely to obtain more grace and by its assistance to merit the enjoyment of God; and it is certain that by every moment we spend for any thing else, we loose more than the whole world can repay.

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The Saints in Heaven by reiterated perfect acts of vertue to Eternity can not merit a greater degree of Glory, yet this I can merit every moment if I will, by one true act of Love to God: Reprobates will not be able to satisfy the divine justice, nor to obtain the pardon of one sin by all their regrets and tears, nor by an Eternity of dreadful Sufferings, but I may do it every moment by one sigh or one tear; by one act of contrition I may appease the wrath of God.

Eternal happiness or misery will be the consequence of my use or abuse of Time; I can work out my Salvation onely while Time lasts; how then can men be so much at a loss how to employ their time? how can they amuse themselves and be taken up with trifles, only to passe away the time? You do not know how to spend the Time. Have you never offended God? are you not oblig'd to him? have you receiv'd no favours from him? Ought not you to adore and serve him? The glorious Saints do not

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think Eternity too long to love, to praise, to bless, and honour him, and shall we think an hour of a day too long?

You dont know what to do; have you no sins to grieve for? Dont you know that Jesus-Christ is in person on the Altar where he expects to be ador'd & is ador'd but by few? and can you want employment for your time? we are never at a loss, how to spend our time but when we have most time to serve and love God: For we can spend whole days in business and vain pleasures, in offending God and destroying our Souls, without being uneasy, or thinking the Time long.

Let us consider that we can secure our Salvation only while Time lasts, and that all the time of our lives is given us only for this End, how careful ought we then to be of improving it? every moment is precious; we loose all if we loose our time.

But do we much value this loss? Do we think that there is such

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a thing as the loss of time? we improve every moment for things of no consequence, we are cast down at disapointments, and with all our care and diligence we are continually afraid that we shall want Time.

But alas! a Time will come when we shall think otherwise, because we shall have juster thoughts; a time will come wherein we shall regret those favorable days and hours which we mispend now. A time will come when we would give all the world to recall some of those precious moments which we now throw away and wilfully loose; when we shall be torn with despair to find that they are all lost, and that time is past.

Then you will cry out, Oh! that I were now in the condition-I was in such a Day of my Life; when I was meditating upon the improvement of Time: Oh! that I had now the same health and strength; my God! what would I not do? but wretch that I am, I

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foreſaw this deſpair which torments me now for having loſt my Time ; why did I make no uſe of that foreſight , nor of that Time ?

Time is ſhort , it ends with our Lives ; wee have already paſſ'd the greateſt part of them , and to what purpoſe ? what uſe have I made of this laſt year ? how much time have I loſt in doing what I ought not , or in omitting what I ought to have done ? and how little of it have I ſpent in doing my duty ? My God ! what a terrible account have I to give of my Time & of theſe preſent Reflections ?

How can I expect mercy from God if I make no better uſe of what is left ? if I defer my Conversion any longer ? how many are dead who were in better health than I ſome months ago ? how many ſeem now in their full vigour who will be in the grave before the year is paſt ? and how do I know that I ſhall not be one of them ?

Let us then work while we have time , we cannot expect it

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ſhould be long , and therefore let us not defer our Conversion one moment. *Ap-ill
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SECOND POINT.

Conſider that you can never repair the loſs of Time , that all you can do will never recall one moment , and if you be capable of reflection and be ſeriously deſirous of Salvation , this will be ſufficient to convince you of the importance of redeeming time.

It is certain that all the moments of our Lives are counted , let us employ them well or ill , we ſhall not increaſe their number , for it is fix'd and leſſens continually. An hour ago we had ſo much more time to work out our Salvation , an hour hence we ſhall have ſo much leſs.

Tho we live holily after the example of Saint Paul and do not looſe one moment of what is left ; yet it is moſt certain that a moment once gone will return no more , and that if it be employed ill 'tis loſt. If we employ the reſt of

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our time well we may escape the dangers into which our abuse of the past has brought us, but we cannot undo what we have done; we have still lost so many precious hours and with them all the graces which God would have bestowed on us, & all the good we might have done in them.

My God! what a loss is this? so many moments lost since we had first the use of reason, and with them so many graces beyond recovery.

When we spend hours and days in vanity we call it passing the Time, a phrase very unfit for a Christians mouth: we pass a way, the time, Time it self passes away, the Time so pass'd is lost, and neither it nor the graces we could have merited in it will return any more.

The Grace of Predestination is in some manner annex'd to some certain moments, what will become of us if God has fix'd ours to some of those moments that are past & lost! The fear of having lost it is indeed a sure and sensible mark

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that I am not yet deprived of it, but what must I expect if I let slip this opportunity, and do not grow better by this fear?

We know time is precious and short, and yet we complain it passes slowly, we are continually wishing for some time to come; whence proceeds this uneasiness? are we weary of living? no; but we make ill use of our Time, and that loss which we see and feel disturbs our quiet and makes us think the time long: All our pleasures and diversions cannot free us from this uneasiness, which never quits those who loose their Time. But they who improve it well for their Salvation are not subject to this uneasiness, nothing is so easy so full of peace as they. Many Saints have with Saint Paul desired to be deliver'd from their Exile that they might perfectly enjoy their God and be out of danger of losing him, but we never find that they were uneasy in the discharge of their duty's in doing the will of God. So true it is that to be entirely satisfy'd and

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contented we need onely make a good use of time by yielding obedience to the Divine Will.

But here let us examine what use we have made of our Time ; its pass'd, & if it be lost too, how great is our loss? how shall we repair it? If we had improv'd those many moments, hours, and days as a Christian ought to do we should now reap the fruit in spirituall consolations; instead of which we feel nothing but regret for having lost so much time, and terrible apprehensions for the exact account we must give of it.

Let us therefore at least make good use of what is left, for the period of our Life is fix'd and we draw nearer it every moment, a time will come when we can improve Time no longer because it will be follow'd by Eternity. Let us for the future improve the little that remains and not loose one single moment.

Quia tempus non erit amplius.

Apec. 10. 6.

THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE SENTIMENTS

We shall have at the hour of Death.

SEE, THE

THIRD MEDITATION;

For the month of *January.*

FIRST MEDITATION

OF THE WILLINGNESS
*of most Christians and the in-
sincerity of their desires to be
saved.*

FIRST POINT. *He who sincerely desires to be saved, must make use of the means.*

SECOND POINT. *It is not enough to make use of some means, but we must make use of all the necessary means of Salvation.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that altho every man pretends to be willing to be saved, yet there are but very few truly willing. The most hardened Sinner will sometimes tell you that he intends to be converted, the most unfaithfull Religious believes himself

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himself desirous of perfection, because no man is so mad or so much his own Enemy as to be fond of ruine, and we know that without Conversion we are ruin'd for ever.

But if we stop there and content our selves with saying we desire it, without making use of the means, we have indeed the thought of Conversion but not the will. If we consult either our faith or Reason the torments of Hell will make us afraid, and the great Truths of our Religion will startle us: but we deceive our selves if we take this for Conversion, tis onely a conviction that we ought to be converted.

A good natural disposition or Education may inspire us with an admiration of virtue and an horror of vice, but the understanding has a greater thare in these Sentiments than the Will, and it is much to be feared that such an aversion to Sin is onely an hatred of its small consequences, and such a love of Piety is no more than an agreea-

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ble Idea of the happiness that at-
tends it, without any efficacious de-
fire of Salvation.

Let us not deceive our selves we
we shall not be judg'd according to
the good thoughts we have enter-
tain'd, but according to the good
works we have done: Hell is full
of souls who were as willing to be
saved as the greatest part of Chri-
stians are, and can we content our
selves with no better a will than
theirs?

We do not design to be damn'd;
there is not one Soul in Hell that
ever design'd it: but like a fran-
tick sick man who says he would
fain be well yet will not take any
thing to make him so, who satisfi-
fy's himselfe with thinking on the
benefits of health but will make
use of no means to be cur'd; so
we desire to be sav'd, but we will
not make use of the means of Sal-
vation. Can any man in his wits
imagine that this is the way to
Heaven? and what truth would
there be in our Religion if it were?

Can we fancy that a faint de-

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fire is sufficient to save us with out
use of means? all the damn'd Souls
have had that desire? Can we en-
ertain a thought so injurious to
the wisdom of Jesus - Christ, and
so unworthy of our holy Faith?
Christ will not have the most la-
bourious carefull Christians believe
themselves out of danger and sure
of their reward, tho they have ne-
glect'd none of the means of Salva-
tion, tho they have liv'd in a con-
stant practise of all virtues: and
shall we think we make our Sal-
vation sure while we do nothing
for it, while we are so plung'd in
the Love and pursuit of the world
that we hardly remember that we
are Christians? If we can once be-
lieve that we may be saved without
the use of means, we must believe
that Christ had a design to impose
upon us, in giving us such Laws;
we must look on all the Saints as
men who had lost their Reason, for
why should they think it impossi-
ble to be sav'd without living up
to the strictness of the Gospell, if
none be damn'd but those who ma-

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liciously and in cold blood resolve to be so.

One would think it impossible for any Christian to entertain so palpable an error, for who can expect to attain an end without using the means? yet how many are there who say they would be saved, that will not use the means? How many Religious think their whole work done when they have left the world? But *Saint Paul* did not think his Salvation sure tho he had left all for Christ, tho he had labour'd and suffer'd so much for his service, and therefore he tells us that *he chastis'd his body and brought it into subjection, lest after having preach'd to others, he himselfe should be come a cast away.*

We are engag'd in an unlawful design, we retain our neighbours goods unjustly, we nourish hatred and malice in our hearts; and though we are thus slaves to our passions, though we do not know how to offer the least violence to our inclinations, because the speculation of the blessedness and glory of the

Castigo
corpus meum
& in servitu-
tem redigo,
ne forte cum
aliis prædi-
caverim, ipse
reprobus ef-
ficiar. 1. Cor.
9. 27.

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just in Heaven makes us conclude that it is good to be there, shall we take this for a sincere desire to be saved? surely we must renounce our Reason if we do.

How many do we see every day toying and labouring for pleasure and gain, their hearts entirely taken up with them and all their thoughts employ'd about making their fortune with so much application, that they scarce think of their being Christians; who because a solemn Holiday or some unusual accident revives the impressions of Religion which they had receiv'd in their Child-hood and makes them spare a few moments for some confus'd reflections on those great Truths: because the apprehensions of eternal misery makes them tremble for a while, tho they go no farther, but immediately return with more eagerness to their disorders; tho the first object effaces those impressions, tho they themselves seek to forget them that they may not be disturb'd in their indifference and carelessness

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of Salvation, yet fancy that they
are very desirous to be saved. Alas!
thy are no otherwife desirous of it,
than, the damn'd in hell were be-
fore them.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that men are seldom so
unreasonable as to expect to be sa-
v'd without making use of means;
but they pick and choose, they
will make use of some but not of
all; they will use those means that
please them best, not those that are
most proper for attaining their End.

Like the sick man of whom S.
Ignatius speaks, who chooses his
Physick, not by the Doctors advice
but his own Palat; refuses those
prescriptions which are proper for
his distemper, and takes onely such
as please his tast, can we think that
such a man is efficaciously desirous
to be cur'd?

Is that desire of Salvation with
which we please our selves, more
sincere? We rarely meet with men
who resolve to observe neither com-

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mands nor counsels: we would be
saved, and we are willing to use
some means, provided we may
choose them: Among so many com-
mands as Christ has given us, 'tis
impossible that we should have an
aversion for all, we choose only
those that please us, tho the rest
be never so necessary. Enormous
sins fright us, but the reservedness
so necessary to preserve our inno-
cence do's not agree with us; we
are ready to give our selves to God,
if we may have leave to retain our
favourite passion.

If we find no difficulty in fasting
we are easily convinc'd that we can-
not obtain Heaven without it: but
because we find it less easy to mor-
tify our passions, to pardon injurys,
& to observe a serious recollection;
we think it sufficient to fast, and
that we may dispense with the rest,
without danger.

Hence proceeds that monstrous
mixture of virtues and vices in the-
same persons who make profession
of Holiness, to the prejudice of
true and real virtue: hence it pro-

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ceeds that we see so little amendment; we trust to those virtues which we think we have, and take no notice of the greatest part of our faults.

We do indeed make use of some means but not of all, and those we choose are generally the most improper to attain our End we do not examine whether they be the best, but whether they be the easiest, the most suitable to our inclinations, and which please us most. We are ready to quit this occasion of debauchery, but we will not break off an acquaintance or renounce an employment tho it be a continual Source of Sin.

Some are willing to give alms, but they are unwilling to enquire if they have nothing that belongs to another, for fear of being oblig'd to restitution; some are willing to make restitution but they will not think of pardoning an injury; others are inclin'd to forgive, but they will not Sacrifice a criminal or dangerous friendship to the care of their Salvation: A Religious

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man is resolv'd never to return into the world, but he takes little pains to perfect himself in his Station; he trembles at the thought of breaking his Vows, but he slights the observation of his Rule, tho the keeping of his vows generally depends on the strict observation of it.

These men have indeed some Reason to think that they are unwilling to be damn'd; but it is certain that they do not really desire to be saved; 'tis evident that they desire it onely by halves, their desire is not sincere by seeming to do some thing for Salvation they think themselves secure, while by not doing all that is requir'd of them they render their peril much greater.

Can that man be in earnest who says he desires to be sav'd, and yet refuses to make use of all the means? when a sick man refuses to take all necessary remedy's, have not we reason to tell him, surely you have a mind to dye? this is just the case of most men who say

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they would be saved, yet will not use all necessary means; may we not very well make them the same reproach, surely you have a mind to be damn'd?

Where is our sincerity? Where is our Truth? can we impose upon our selves so far as to think that we sincerely desire to save our souls at the same time that we neglect them so strangely? While we are so earnest and diligent when we desire to succeed in any worldly business.

What a difference is there between a man following his business or his study, and the same man working out his Salvation? Were we as earnest for heaven as we are for honours and Riches, we should soon be great Saints; for we cannot be rich if we will, but we may be Saints if we will.

We are not contented to make use of all necessary means to obtain our temporal ends, we employ even those that are not necessary, and we justify all this care and pains by saying that we would not have

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any neglect to reproach our selves; do we observe this maxim in the business of our soul? shall we have nothing to reproach our selves on a Death bed?

If we do not design to be saved why do we make use of any means? if we do design it, why do we not make use of all? is it not because some are more difficult than others? but to what purpose do we practise onely those that are easy, since they are all necessary? Are we ignorant that he who does not do all he ought to be saved, is no more advanced than of he had done nothing?

Do we think some few and doubtful means sufficient in a business of consequence? And would we venture its success upon such means as common experience has found very improper for a business of that nature? certainly the business of Salvation is a business of consequence.

Jesus-Christ hath declar'd that he will have all or nothing, that he will accept no divided heart,

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there is no medium, they who are not absolutely for him, are against him. Yet notwithstanding we all know this, lukewarmness & tepidity, this divided heart is the character of most Christians at this day.

Thus we live; but did any of the Saints sanctify himselfe by such a Life? Do not we our selves doubt of the Salvation of those who dye in such a State? What shall we think of our condition if we don't take other measures after all these Reflections? can we reasonably expect to be saved?

And that which makes our danger yet more visible, is that our Lives are a manifest contradiction to our Faith; and yet we do not mind it: we are convinc'd that it is necessary to Salvation to believe the mystery of the Trinity, and of the Eucharist, notwithstanding all the difficulties that sence & reason suggest, because God hath reveal'd them: but hath not the same God declared that he who will be saved must abhor the maxims of the

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world, that he must bear the cross daily, and must make use of those very means which I neglect? we durst not pretend a desire of Salvation if we refus'd to believe the least title of what Christ requires us to believe in order to be saved, how then can I pretend that I desire to be saved if I practise onely some part of the means which he hath clearly told were absolutely necessary to Salvation.

But our Religion is too sincere not to condemn this contradiction between our Faith and manners; it teaches us that God requires all or nothing, & surely he deserves very little if he do's not deserve all: it would be better for us to give him none, than not to give him all: such a division is exceeding injurious to him; for infine, we carry our selves thus only to those whom we neither respect nor fear; God abhors this conduct, he hates tepidity more than coldness, and therefore cannot endure to be serv'd by halves.

Absolute perfection is not neces-

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fary, but our Saviour commands
every one efficaciously to seek per-
fection in his station; do not ob-
ject that the number of these men
of good will is so very small. that
if this be true there will be but few
saved; who can doubt of it after
what Christ hath told us of the
small number of the Elect? Do we
see many who *love God with all*
their hearts? how can we pretend
that we are sincerely desirous of
Salvation while we do not observe
this first and great Commandment:
while we make use onely of some
meanes and neglect the rest & while
we satisfy, our selves with some
pretended good works of our
own choosing, and indulge our selves
in our belov'd passion which is
a continual Source of Sin.

I see now my God that I have
not been truly willing; that I have
hitherto deceiv'd my selfe with a
false desire, which hath kept me in
ignorance of the greatness of my
danger; but I am now resolv'd
sincerely to be saved at anyrate;
And I have some grounds to be-

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lieve that I am truly willing; but
it is thy grace my Dear Saviour that
must render my desire efficacious,
I hope for it through thy mercy; I
am convinc'd of the necessity of
using all the means, this conviction
hath dispos'd me to do whatever
thou commandest; command now
whatever thou pleasest: will make
no difficulty, I will obey without
any reserve.

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Paratum
cor meum
Deus & para-
tum cor
meum.
Ps. 56. 9.

SECOND MEDITATION.

OF LUKEWARMNESS

FIRST POINT. *There is no state*
more dangerous than a Lukewarm
state.

SECOND POINT. *It is harder*
to recover out of a Lukewarm
state, than from any other.

FIRST POINT

C Onsider that by a lukewarm
State is meant a certain dis-
position of the Soul, in which it

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contents its selfe with avoiding heinous sins, but takes little care to avoid small faults: it is negligent in spiritual duty's, its prayers are distracted, its confessions without amendment, its communions without fervour and without fruit; it is unfaithful to the divine grace and sins without fear or remorse.

Such a soul grows indifferent to the greatest virtues, and soon after disgusted with them: its affections languish in the service of God, so that the yoke of Christ seems heavy & insupportable; its thoughts are distracted & so very little taken up with God or its selfe that it suffers them to rove after every object: it dares not retire in to its selfe because it can find no peace there: In this condition it makes no scruple of exposing its selfe to the occasions of Sin, if it do's any good 'tis only by fits if it performs any duty's 'tis only out of custom: and provided it keeps some measures and avoids the reproaches of those of whom it stand in awe it is not

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at all solicitous to please God, whom it offends almost by every action.

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It makes no difficulty of committing all sorts of venial Sins with deliberation; it performs with reluctance and uneasiness those devotions which it cannot avoid: it entertains an aversion for pious Christians because their vertue is an uneasy reproach to it: it takes pleasures onely in the imperfect, because their actions countenance its carelessness

Hence proceed those pernicious friendships to which so many pretended Friends owe their ruine, those insipid galleries on Christian exactness whereby they stifle the small remainders of their fervour; they are no sooner in this wretched state of Lukewarmness but they frame to themselves a false Conscience, under the shelter of which they frequent the Sacraments and do some good works, yet still indulge themselves in secret aversions, in envious jealousies, in criminal and

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dangerous engagements, in uneasiness & murmuring against their Superiors, in selfe Love and in pride which influence almost all their actions, and in an hundred other faults of the same nature in the midst of which they live unconcern'd, they persuade themselves that there is no great crime in all this, and seek for excuses to palliate those faults which God condemns as heinous sins, and which they themselves will condemn as such when they come to dye, for then their passions will be no longer able to hinder them from seeing things as they are in themselves; surely it is no hard matter to discover that the Salvation of a man in such a state as this, is in great danger.

The State of a Soul in mortal sin is very dangerous, but our Saviour judges a lukewarm state to be yet worse, for he tells the Angel or Bishop of the Church of Laodicea, I would 'thou wert either cold or hot for because thou art lukewarm and neither col nor hot,

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I will cast thee out of my mouth as tainted & offensive.

Do's Jesus - Christ who bears with the greatest Sinners, who is alwayes ready to pardon them, who did not abhor even Judas himselfe; do's he abhor a lukewarm Soul? hath he who is so tender towards Sinners, no tenderness, no love, for a Soul that is neither cold nor hot? What hopes then can such a Soul have of being saved?

We ought not to despair of the Salvation of the most notorious Sinner; though his disorders and crimes have render'd his Conversion difficult we ought still to hope, for he knows his Sins & is therefore more capable of being made sensible of them and of hating them. Tell the greatest Sinner of the severe judgments of God, of Death, and of the rigour and duration of Eternal Torments; the force of these terrible verity's may alarm and convert him: but all this makes no impression on a lukewarm Soul; his condition is without remedy; because it abstains from

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crying and scandalous Sins which startle a Soul that hath any fear left, 'it do's not mind Spiritual and interior faults, it mingles them with some actions of Piety, so that they easily pass unregarded by a Conscience that is not exceeding tender, and thus not knowing the greatness of its danger it do's nothing to prevent it.

Nothing do's a Soul Good in this condition; Prayers, exhortations, reading, masses, meditations, Sacraments, are all fruitless: whether it be that the little benefit it hath hitherto receiv'd by them gives it a disgust, and takes away its desire to make use of them; or that being accustom'd to them they have less effect; that having heard these terrible truths discours'd of an hundred times, and having as often discours'd of them its selfe to no purpose, they make no impression on it.

It receives but few graces because of its unfaithfulness in those which it do's receive; its faults are always great because they are at-

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tended with an higher contempt, a greater malice & a blacker ingratitude than the faults of others: this odious mixture of good and bad which composes the character of a lukewarm Soul discovers clearly how injurious such a conduct is to God: the seeming good works that it do's are a convincing proof that it hath not forgotten God, but its careless and imperfect way of doing them shews how little it stands in awe of that God whom it serves with so much indifference and disgust: And indeed this disgust is mutual, it has an aversion to Christ and Christ hath an aversion to it; no wonder that such men immediately after their communions are ready to return again to and renew their Sins as if they had not receiv'd; the Opinion of their pretended good works tenders them proof against all wholesome advice; they can hear it with all the coldness in the world, and 'tis this that makes so many good thoughts and holy inspirations useless.

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Hence proceeds the strange blindness of a lukewarm Soul, and that horrible insensibility which is the heaviest of judgments, and the utmost degree of misery: And therefore S. Bernard and S. Bonaventure declare that it is much easier to convert a worldling tho never so wicked than a Lukewarm Religious.

What hope is left for such a Soul? there is no remedy for it; it will not be cur'd, because it is not sensible of its illness: It is a sick Creature whose condition is the more desperate because it laughs at those who think its sick; so that there is need of a greater miracle to convert a lukewarm Soul, than to make the blind to see or to raise the dead to Life.

None but thou my God canst do it, thou art able to cure the most inveterate diseases; but thou hatest Lukewarmness, and this makes me fear; I cannot pray with that confidence as I would for the most scandalous sinner; I acknowledge that I have been hither to in

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a lukewarm State. But since thou hast made me sensible of it, I am persuaded thou desirest to draw me out of it. Oh! let not this renewed grace which perhaps will be lost thou wilt ever Offer me, be ineffectual: thou wouldst have me be saved, I am resolv'd to be saved, what then can hinder my Salvation?

SECOND POINT.

Consider that a lukewarm state is not only very dangerous, but which is more strange it is almost impossible to recover a Soul out of it because he that would recover must be sensible of his being in danger, which a tepid Soul is not.

An heinous Sinner easily knows his danger; there are certain favourable moments where in by the help of grace he discovers so much deformity in his Soul that he presently laments his misery, which knowledge and confession render his conversion much less difficult.

But a lukewarm Soul do's not believe that he is lukewarm; he

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that believes himselfe tepid ceases to be so, for we are rarely sensible of our condition till we begin to be fervent: this renders the conversion of the lukewarm almost impossible, for which way shall one go about to persuade them that they are in such a State? Blindness is the first effect of Tepidity.

Its unfaithfulness being gradual it is less sensible of them, then its faults grow habitual, and at last it takes pleasures in them: nothing toucheth it when it is in this condition, and it suspects nothing: it is not sensible of any new fault; it grows lukewarm without omitting one of its devotions; 'tis the imperfections of these very devotions that give birth to its tepidity, and help it to deceive its selfe by covering its reall faults with a false appearance of vertue.

God himselfe who so loudly alarms the Sinner is now silent and will not awake him; but leaves him to dye in this mortal Lethargy: I will begin says he to cast thee out, he do's not do it all at once,

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once he throws him off by degrees that he may not see it: the unhappy Soul is rejected and his reprobation sealed, and he do's not perceive it, nor is he in the least sensible of his wretched condition.

And what hope can he have to be cur'd? how is it possible for him to recover out of this dismall state? The advice of his true Friends, the pious counsellors of his wise director, and of his zealous Superior, and the best examples, are all ill received: by his insensibility and hardness of heart he seems to be enchanted, all his actions bear the visible marks of certain reprobation, and that God hath left him.

Saint Bonaventure observes that it is no extraordinary thing to see notorious sinners quit their sins and become truly penitent, but that it is very extraordinary to see a lukewarm Soul recover. And to this we may apply the words of *S. Paul* in that terrible passage at which all those who grow cold after having been fervent in the service of God

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should tremble ; *it is impossible*
(that is extremely difficult) *for*
them who were once enlightned and
have tasted of the heavenly gift, and
were made partakers of the Holy
Ghost preferably to many others,
and of the sweetness of a Spittual
Life, and of saving Truths, *if they*
fall away , if they grow weary of
serving God and return to theyr
Sins, *it is impossible to renew them*
again unto Repentance.

But my God what is all this to
a lukewarm Soul unless by a mira-
cle of mercy thou art pleas'd to
open his eyes and to make him see
his dangers ? he do's not suspect
himselſe of being fallen away, nor
will he suspect it till thou discover
it to him by an inward light ; and
what will it avail him to be convin-
ced of it, unlesſe thou givest an ex-
traordinary supply of grace to recover
him from that wretched State ?

Let us now examine if we have
no reason to fear ? The Lukewarm
are exceeding curious, they will try
all Sorts of devotions, and there-
fore may possibly read this medita-

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tion but let them not deceive them-
selves, this day of retreat may be
profitable if we examine impartially
and diligently whether this dange-
rous tepidity do's not influence all
our actions, whether the Sacraments
are usefull to us, and whether we
grow daily less imperfect by the
Exercises of Virtue.

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THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE SENTIMENTS
*we shall have at the hour
of Death.*

SEE, THE
THIRD MEDITATION,
For the month of *January.*

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FIRST MEDITATION OF HELL.

FIRST POINT. *The damn'd in
Hell suffer all the torments that
can possibly be suffer'd.*

SECOND POINT. *The Damn'd
suffer to Eternity.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider ther is an Hell, that
is a place of torments prepar'd
for those Souls who dye in their
Sins ; we are so us'd to hear of
Hell that we are very little affec-
ted with the thoughts of it ; but if
we were truly sensible what Hell is,
we should never think of it without
more & more horreur.

Imagine that you see in the cen-
ter of the Earth a vast and bottom-
less lake of fire and flames, the

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damn'd plung'd and rowling in it;
all cover'd and transperc'd with fire,
which they suck in with their breath,
and which enters at their eyes and ears;
their mouths and nostrils casting forth
dreadful flames; their skin scorch'd,
their flesh, blood, humours, and brains
boyling and bubling up with the violence
of the burning, their bones and marrow
all on fire like a piece of iron taken red
hott out of the furnace, all the parts of
their body on fire and the fire in every part
of it.

How glad would these wretches be to suffer only from our fire, notwithstanding the
horror of being thrown into a burning gulph, but alas!
there is no comparaisn between it and the fire of Hell:
my God! what tourments! Ours is lightsome, theirs dark;
Ours is an effect of the goodness and bounty of God,
theirs is the product of his incens'd Omnipotence, and of the
infinite hatred he bears to Sin: tis a fire which the Almighty
do's all he can to render furious &

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raging; and alas! it is not their onely torment,
this fire makes them feel at the same time all sorts of pains.

Represent to your selfe a man tormented with the gout or a violent colique;
what pains do's he feel? how do's he cry out? how willingly
would he dye to put an end to his torture? and yet he suffers
onely in one part of his body, he hath the Liberty of complaining
& the satisfaction of seeing himselfe pityed;
what would it be if every member suffer'd the same torment?
if instead of helping him the standers by abus'd him without suffering him to complain?

In hell, the damn'd do not onely suffer the pains to which we are subject in this Life,
they suffer all these and infinitely more, their torments are
universal, violent, complicated, and all excessive, in one instant
they feel them all, and in the midst of all they cannot receive
or so much as hope for any ease, what would one drop of water
be against a whole Sea of flames?

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And yet that poor refreshment, that nothing is deny'd them.

The sick find some ease in tumbling and removing from one place to another, but the damn'd shall be eternally in the fire, unmovable as a rock.

Yet all these dreadful torments are nothing to their despair when they look back on the time that is lost, and the ill use they have made of it. The thoughts of the damn'd will be employ'd to all Eternity in calling to mind the vanity of those objects which made them forget God. I have plung'd my selfe into this abyss of darkness and everlasting flames for the love of a trifling pleasure, of an imaginary honour; which I could possess but a moment, and of which I have scarce any Idea left: where are now all those fantomes of glory greatness, and reputation, which took up all my Time, and made me forget Eternity? Where is that fortune to which I sacrific'd my all? Where are all those whom I lov'd so well? Where are those of

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whose vain opinion, censures, and power I stood so much in awe? Yet these I preferr'd to the favour & love of God and for these I have lost my Soul.

The opportunitys of Salvation which he hath abus'd and the reward that he hath lost, will take up the thoughts of a damn'd soul to all Eternity: How easily might I have confess'd such a Sin? God offer'd me his Love, he gave me warning, he press'd and sollicitated me so long, & gave me so many years of health since my fall; I pass'd for a wise man in the world: Oh! how came I to defer my conversion to the hour of Death? How often have I trembled at the thought of my danger, at the apprehension of damnation? And yet am damn'd at last: I need only have done those good worke which such a friend, such a companion, such a Relation, have done; I began well, it would have cost me little to persevere, and if it had cost me never so much, could

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I take too much pains to avoid damnation?

Add to these inconceivable torments, to these cruel regrets, the irreconcilable loss of the supreme Good; the sense of a God irritated to Eternity, of a God lost without recovery, lost for ever, this is the height and perfection of their misery; they never cease to be the Victims of the Divine wrath and vengeance; we must know what God is before we can be able to conceive what it is to lose him without hope: tho we are so little affected with it now, they who have lost him have other thoughts. How insupportable will be the remembrance that I had a Redeemer, but I slighted the price by which I was redeemed; that my Saviour lov'd me to such a degree, and that it is impossible for me to love him, that I am hated by him, and that he will never have any compassion on my misery.

O! my Dear Saviour! who hast

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suffer'd so much so recall me, who hast bought me with so great a price that I might not be lost; thou wilt take pleasure to see me plung'd into this fiery gulph: thou wilt heap everlasting misery on me without mercy, thou wilt be no longer my Father, nor my Saviour: no wonder if Hell be a place of weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth, of despair and woe, since the Almighty who made the world by one act of his will, do's all he can, seems to exert all his power & force to make a wretched Creature suffer.

There is an Hell, and yet there are Sinners; Christians believe there is an Hell, and yet this hell is full of Christians.

There is an Hell; and at this very moment an infinite number of miserable Souls are tormented in it: 'tis certain that many of those with whom we converse, that many of those who read this, and who meditate on the torments of Hell, will one day be cast into those everlasting flames.

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Non mortui
laudabunt te
neque omnes
qui descen-
dunt in infer-
num.
Psalm. 113. 17.

And am not I like to be one of them? Divine Saviour! thou hast not bought me to destroy me: but hast not thou also shed thy blood for those that are lost? This makes me fear and tremble; but what good will this fear do me if I loose my Soul? Oh! my good Master! I will be sav'd what ever it cost me; I humbly beseech thee by thy precious blood suffer me not to be damn'd; what will it advance thy glory to shut me up for ever in that abyss of fire and flames? *They who do go down to Hell do not praise thy name*, they do not love thee there: if thou sufferest me to fall into Hell it will only augment the number of those who hate and blaspheme thee. My God! I will be sav'd, tho all the rest of the world were lost; thou wouldst have me be sav'd, I trust in thy mercy, and hope that thou wilt place me among thy Elect.

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SECOND POINT.

Consider that the torments of Hell are not onely universall, excessive, and dreadfull, they are Eternal too; notwithstanding all their horror, there is no hope that they can either end or diminish.

What must be the thoughts of a damn'd Soul when after infinite millions of years she casts her eyes from that abyss of Eternity, upon the short moment of her Life and can hardly find it after that vast number of ages which are past since she came here? Life tho consider'd never so near appears but a moment; the time past of it, seems but an instant to us who live, and when we come to dye tho we have liv'd long we can hardly persuade our selves that there hath been any interval between the day of our births, and the present Day: all that is past seems a Dream: what then will it be after Death? when so many millions of years are over, when our descendants for many generations

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are all forgotten ; when time has ruin'd our houses, destroy'd the Citys , and overturn'd the Kingdoms wherein we liv'd : when the end of Ages shall have bury'd the whole Universe in its own ashes, and infinite millions of Ages after ?

This is dreadful , but all this is not Eternity ; when a damn'd soul shall have suffered all theis while, and an hundred thousand times as much , 'tis nothing to Eternity.

Were one of the damn'd oblig'd to fill the hollow of a mans hand with his tears , and to drop but one single tear at the end of each thousand years, what a terrible duration would this be ? Cain the first of the damn'd , would have shed but six or seven , Judas but one ; but if he were oblig'd at the same rate to make a brook or a river of his tears , to fill the Sea or the vast extent between heaven and Earth, what a prodigious length of time would this require ? Our imagination is lost and confounded in so vast a duration ; but all this great and inconceivable extent of time is nothing

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to Eternity : A time will come when every one of those wretched Souls will be able to say, one tear for every thousand years that I have been in Hell would have drown'd the Universe and fill'd up the immense space between Heaven and Earth, and yet I have an Eternity of unspeakable torments still to suffer ; all I have suffered is nothing to this Eternity ; after millions of Ages as many times multiply'd , after an extensive duration in which our thoughts are lost , the fire of Hell will be as violent and fierce , the damn'd will be as capable of torment , and as sensible of their pains, and God as incens'd & as far from being pleas'd as the first moment.

Oh ! dreadful , Oh ! incomprehensible Eternity ! were we only to burn for every wicked thought as many millions of Ages as we have liv'd days , hours , or minutes, our pains would have an end at last ; but to know certainly that our torments will never end ; alwayes to suffer , & be assured that we shall alwayes suffer , to be alwayes thin-

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king on the happiness we have lost, on the torments we have brought upon our selves, on the means of avoiding them which we have had; to have continually before our eyes the vanity of every thing we have preferr'd to God, and the little while that our pleasures have lasted, the unutterable sweetness we might have tasted in his service, the vast difference between the pains we fear'd in the practise of virtue, and those which we are now forc'd to suffer in the flames of Hell to have the thoughts of this Eternity allwayes present, and to burn, rage, and despair for ever: my God! what misery!

If these reflections do not convert us, if the prospect of those Torments, of this Eternity do's not touch us, if the fear of this everlasting regret do's not wean us from Sin, and from our vain amusements, are we rational creatures? are we Christians?

These terrible veritys have made so many Martyrs, have peopled the deserts and daily fill the Convents;

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what do we think of these men? did they do wisely? did they do well to neglect nothing, to do all they were able to avoid Hell?

Who would not give all he is worth to be freed from a dungeon? who thinks any pains too great to prolong his Life? But Oh! what do we do, nay what do we not refuse to do to avoid Hell?

The divine Justice is terrible; God punishes these that offend him with Eternal torments in Hell; yet we offend him in the sight of this Hell; certainly an Eternity of misery is not too severe a punishment for such malice; if there were no hell already God should make one on purpose for such offenders.

The thoughts of Hell make us tremble; we are unwilling to think of it lest it should affright us; and yet we are not afraid to run headlong into it: we are afraid to think of the Eternal duration of those bitter torments, and yet we will not make one step out of the road that leads to them.

There is an Hell and yet we

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delight in pleasures, and Sin hath
still charms for us; we think the
practise of virtue difficult, and there
are still careless and imperfect Reli-
gious, and debauch'd Christians;
this seems as incomprehensible as
Eternity it selfe.

You object that perfection is not
necessary to avoid hell; true it is
not necessary, but can you keep to
farr from a Lake of Fire into which
so many fall? Can you take too
much care and too many precautions
to preserve your selfe from everla-
sting fire, rage, & despair?

How cruel must the thoughts of
a damn'd soul be, who knows that
he might have been eternally as hap-
py as he is eternally miserable, if he
had pleas'd; that he might have been
a Saint with ease, and is not becau-
se he was not pleas'd to be so: that
his Brethren are in heaven, but he
is in Hell: he laugh'd at those who
being afraid of the condition in
which he is now, liv'd otherwise
than he did; and now, what would
he not do to be what they are? I
call'd an holy exactness, melancoly;

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a Christian modesty & reservedness I
call'd stupidity, & scrupulousness;
Oh! that I had been so stupid,
so scrupulous and melancoly; that
exactness, that reserve has made
many Saints who are now in heaven
absorpt in Joys; but what is beco-
me now that I am in flames, of all
my mirth and good humour which
I affect'd to shew by rallying eve-
ry thing? If I had imitated such and
such of my acquaintance, if I had
made good use of the divine inspi-
rations such a day; if I had been
faithful to such a grace, if I had
shun'd such an occasion of Sin, if
I had practis'd such a virtue, if I
had mortify'd my selfe, if I had
been truly willing, I should be now
in heaven instead of which I am
damn'd to Eternity, I am lost, and
lost for ever. Oh terrible regret!
And that which aggravates my mi-
sery is the remembrance how often
I have thought on the pains I now
endure, on that eternal regret I
should one day feel if I were dam-
ned.

Yet after all this, men damn

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themselves ; Great God ! thy vengeance is just ; they deserve it all.

Is it possible that we can avoid thinking on Hell ? is it possible that we can think on it and not be converted ? Is it possible that we are converted , and do not continue to think on it ? we must have it all ways before our eyes after our conversion to prevent our falling ; the greatest Saints , those pure souls whose hearts were all inflam'd with the Love of God thought it absolutely necessary for them to meditate on Hell , and the apprehensions of it made them tremble ; and can any who pretend to virtue , can any Religious man imagine that it is unnecessary to think on Hell ? certainly such men dare not think on it ; they are conscious to themselves that they do not take pains enough to give them ground to hope that they shall not be condemn'd ; but have they less cause to fear because they have a greater account to give ? And how can they hope to be less severely punish'd because they are under greater obligations ?

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Christ had good reason to tell us that Hell is the onely evil we ought to fear ; for what is a man the worse for being hated and persecuted ; for being reduced to a mean and obscure Life , and for being mortify'd , if he escape being damn'd ?

My God ! if thou art resolved to punish me for my Sins , chastise me in this Life , but do not damn me. I will satisfy thy justice here , I will hope in thy mercy , and will love thee ; what satisfaction will it be to thee to see me in Hell , surrounded with flames , transported with rage and despair , hating and cursing thee , and eternally blaspheming thy name ?

My God ! hast thou given me time to think on the pains of Hell , onely to augment my despair one day , for being damn'd after having thought on these pains ? Remember I am sprinkled with the blood of Jesus , and 'tis through that blood that I beg and hope for mercy ; Thou hast paid too great a price for me to be indifferent whether I be lost or no. I will be sav'd ; suffer me

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Hic ure, not to be lost; if thou wilt punish
hic seca, me do it in time, but let not my pu-
modo in æ- nishment be Eternal.
ternum par-
gas.

SECOND MEDITATION. OF THE FRUITS of Penance.

FIRST POINT. *Penance is
necessary for all sorts of men.*

SECOND POINT. *What the
Fruits of that Penance ought
to be.*

FIRST POINT.

Consider that mortification and penance is the onely way to heaven; Jesus-Christ shew'd us no other way; and the Saints who from their infancy were confirmed in grace, knew no other. Tis an error to imagine that penance is necessary onely for great Sinners, and no less an error to think that

mortification is the virtue onely of the perfect; if we be Sinners we must do penance to endeavour to appease the wrath of God, and to obtain mercy and pardon; if we are so happy as not to have lost our innocence, penance is necessary for us to preserve that precious treasure; we have sin'd, we may sin again, two powerful motives to do penance.

Since we all confess that men sin more frequently in the world, and that they are more expos'd to the danger of offending God than in a cloyster, can we reasonably believe that penance belongs onely to Monastery's, and that none but Religious are oblig'd to mortification? Do we consider that many of those Religious whom we think indispensably oblig'd to do penance, never lost their innocence; & shall we who own our selves guilty of many Sins, and who are in danger of committing more every moment, shall we think to persuade our selves that mortification and penance do not belong to us?

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It we had nothing but our own passions to overcome could we reasonably hope to conquer them without the exercise of penance? and who can reasonably hope to be saved without subduing his passions?

It is an article of Faith that none enter into heaven but those who do violence to themselves; and yet we pretend to enter there without mortification. The Life of man upon the earth is a perpetual warfare, for *S. Paul* tells us that the *desires of the flesh are contrary to the desires of the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are contrary to those of the flesh*; how then can we hope to be victorious without the practise of Penance?

We please our sensual appetites in every thing, we are careful of our body's even to excess, we follow blindly our natural inclinations, and in this condition we live without fear in the midst of the world where we are expos'd to the greatest dangers. Certainly either we are of a different nature from the rest of mankind, or the Devil
stands

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stands in awe of us and respects us, or we are confirm'd in Grace, or else we are in danger (which is much more probable) to dye in our Sins: Do's heaven cost the most fervent and generous souls so much, and can we expect that the lazy and imperfect should gain it with less pains?

Saint Paul chastis'd his body, he joyn'd a continual penance to the cruell persecutions he suffered, for fear of being perverted himselfe while he converted others: And shall men who dare not pretend to be any thing near as perfect as S. Paul, imagine that they have no need to practise mortification?

Were the Saints more frail than we? Did they expect another recompense? Did they follow another guide? or serve another Master? Their lives were a continual mortification, are ours like them? And can we call our selves the Disciples of Christ while we neglect to do penance? Our Saviour says, if any man will come after me let

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him deny himselfe and bear his
Cross daily.

True mortification is inseparable
from true piety, not only because
no virtue can subsist long without a
constant and generous mortification,
but also because no virtue is real
that is not attended with it.

We have great reason to distrust
our exercises of piety, our good
works; every thing is to be suspec-
ted in those whose passions are strong,
& who are unmortify'd.

It do's not seem that we are afraid
of the difficulty, we dislike the
motive, for what do we not suffer
in the service of the world? Alas!
if God requir'd of his servants, all
that the world exacts of those who
serve it, I am afraid he would have
but few servants.

How to we constrain our selves
every day to please those whom our
Interest requires us to manage? what
mortification so severe and so con-
tinual as a Courtiers, a Merchants
intent upon his trade, a Soldiers,
or a scholars? Yet they are not dis-

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courag'd, they seem satisfy'd amydst
all their sufferings; but when God
calls upon us to constrain our sel-
ves a little, every thing is uneasy,
we find his yoke heavy, virtue
frights us, we are disgusted, and
the sole thought of mortification
makes us loose courage.

But oh! we shall have other
thoughts on a death bed; when the
image of Jesus-Christ crucifyed is
presented to us, will not the sight
of it have a quite contrary effect? it
will upbraid our delicacy and in-
crease our regret for having lead so
lazy, so sensual a Life, for ha-
ving neglected penance and mor-
tification.

They present a Crucifix to the
dying, but my God! do all the
dying find much comfort in con-
templating a crucifix at their Death?
is it possible, my dear Jesus that the
mortification which thou hast ren-
der'd so easy, should seem hard
and insupportable only when we
are to practise it in conformity to
thy example, and for Love of
thee?

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Oh ! my God ! what should I do, if thou hadst requir'd of thy servants , if I were bound to do and suffer as much for salvation , as I do and suffer to ruine my selfe, thou requirest less than the world do's , less than I do and suffer in its service , and shall I refuse to do and suffer what is absolutely necessary for salvation , what I have deserv'd by my offenses , and what all the blessed Spirits in heaven have done and suffer'd that they might imitate thee ?

Abste mihi
gloriar in
nisi in cruce
Domini no-
sti Jesu
Christi , per
quem mihi
mundus cru-
cifixus est, &
ego mundo.
Gal. 6. 14,

God forbid that I should glory in any thing but in the Croß of our Lord Jesus - Christ , by Whom the World is crucify'd to me , and I unto the World.

SECOND POINT.

Consider that by the fruits of penance is meant not only macerating our body's , but chiefly the mortification of our passions , and the Reformation of our Lives ; these are indeed the fruits which God expects from our Contrition and

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pennance : by these marks we may know whether we have made good use of the Sacraments , and whether we be truly sorry for our Sins , and faithful to the Grace of God.

The Exercises of Devotion, the frequentation of the Sacraments , and the practise of good works are powerful means of perfection ; but while we retain our former passions with these powerful means , while we are as proud , as impatient , as peevish , as envious , as difficult to be pleas'd , as cholerik , as unmortify'd , as full of selfe. Love as before , can we reasonably rely on these pretended exercises of Piety ?

Mortification of the body is an exercise of Penance , but that penance must have its fruit , which consists in suppressing our passions , in regulating our inclinations , and in repairing the disorders of self-Love.

To what purpose do we confess so often , if in a whole years time we have not perhaps reformed any one of the faults that we con-

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fess ? its is not enough for us to
detest our Sins, we must resolve to
commit them no more, and how
can that resolution be sincere if we
do not likewise resolve to avoid
the least occasion of Sin ? The exe-
cution of this resolution is properly
the fruit of penance. In good
earnest if we know the efficacy of
this Sacrament of penance only by
the fruits we find of it in our sel-
ves, should we have an high Idea
of it ? It is much to be feared that
our using our selves by an unac-
countable carelessness, and especially
by want of contrition to reap no
profit by the Sacrament, will ren-
der our disease incurable.

A Religious Life is a continual
penance, but is there no danger
of its being unfruitful ? What a mi-
serable thing would it be for a
Religious to have done penance so
long without any fruit ? And what
fruit can an unmortify'd Religious
who is of a worldly spirit, lu-
kewarm and careless receive from
all his penance ? He is very much
in the wrong who bears the Cross;

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and will not tast the fruits of it ?
he would not suffer more, nay he
would suffer much less, for those
fruits are full of true sweetness.

It is certain that every body has
very much to suffer in this life;
we shall meet with Crosses every
where, they who live most at their
ease are not exempted : let us at
least bear them patiently, let us
unite our sufferings with the suf-
ferings of Christ, this will not aug-
ment them, but it will make us
reap fruit by them.

Another fruit of penance is a
constant practise of mortification :
My God ! what fruit may we not
gather from this practise ? Every
thing in the world may give us an
opportunity to curb our inclina-
tions, there is no place, no time
improper for it without deviating
from the rules of good sense. Let
him who loves Jesus-Christ truly
make a good use of these little oc-
casions ; have we a great desire to
see any object, or to speak in some
particular occasion ? we may reap
great benefit by casting down our

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Eyes and holding our thoughts. If we have an opportunity to gain applause by saying something very seasonably, or by some witty piece of rallery, we have also an opportunity of making a great Sacrifice. There is scarce an hour where in some subject of mortification do's not present it selfe are we sitting or standing, we may choose an uneasy seat, or a painful posture without seeming to affect it. In fine, the inconveniences of the place, of the season, the disagreeableness of the company, born so that we seem not to mind them, are indeed little occasions of mortification, but the mortification its selfe is not little, in these small occasions. It is very meritorious, and I may say that the greatest graces and the most sublime holiness commonly depend upon a generous constant mortification in these small matters. A punctual performance of the duty's of our community, an exact observation of our Rule, a conformity to the common way of living in every thing, without any regard to our

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inclinations, our employments, or our Age, are precious fruits of a mortification so much the more considerable as it is less subject to vanity. and more conform'd to the Spirit of Christ.

These are the true fruits of penance, what hinders our bearing abundance of them? But there is another fruit of penance yet more necessary, and without which all the rest will avail us little for Eternity; and that is the Reformation of our manners, the victory over our dominating passion; Let us observe what passion is most powerful, which habit is strongest, to what sin we are most subject, which is in some manner the source of all the rest, and of all the false maxims we frame to our selves, in matter of Conscience. All other sins may be strangers to us, but the dominating passion is our proper character, the fruit of a true conversion is to retrench our reigning vice, to conceive an holy detestation of that imperious passion, to fight against it without ceasing. The Victory over

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this Sin alone will deliver us from the strongest temptations : but we willingly attack our other sins and commonly spare this : and this is the true cause of our receiving so little benefit by our penance.

My God ! what do we stay for to become fruitful ? thou hast cultivated us with so much care , we are planted in a ground watered with thy tears and precious blood ; how long shall we be unfruitful ? what do we get by bringing forth only thorns ? we feel their points , but we receive no benefit by our pain , because we fly from the Cross. I am resolv'd my Dear Saviour to neglect nothing that I may not live such a barren Life : I can do nothing without thy Grace , I can do all things with it , since thou givest me this Time for penance , suffer me not to abuse it any more ; My God I am resolv'd to begin this moment to bring forth fruits worthy of penance.

THIRD MEDITATION.

OF THE SENTIMENTS

*We shall have at the hour
 of Death.*

SEE , THE

THIRD MEDITATION,

For the month of *January.*

CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS.

WHICH MAY SERVE

*for matter of Consideration,
for every day of
Retreat.*

OF SALVATION.

ARe we fully convinc'd of the great Truths of our Religion? If we do not believe them, we do too much, but if we do believe what we profess we do not do enough. Dare we say that the Saints did more than was needful? tho at the end of their Lives, when mens judgments are most impartial, they were troubled for having done no more. How different are our Lives from theirs? Do we indeed walk in the same way with them? Do we govern our selves by the same Rules? and yet we pretend to arrive at the same place. Good God! have not we reason to fear that we are

out of the way? We admire the wisdom of the Saints for practising what they believed; but how little do's our practise agree with our belief? And shall we have cause to applaud our selves on a Death-bed for our past Lives?

Of the importance of Salvation.

What is this Salvation of which we talk so much? this soul? this Eternity? Is it true that I am sent into the world onely to secure it? is it true that I am undone if I do not secure it, tho I should gain the whole world? is it true and do I indeed believe that the business of my Salvation is the greatest business I can have? That it is indeed my only business? That nothing else deserves my care? that this requires all my application, and alone depends on it? if I do not believe this I am lost for ever; and if I do believe it, do not I deserve to be severely punish'd for my indifference, which degenerates into a downright contempt of Salvation? do I apply

my selfe to this great business? am I much concern'd about it? And what ground have I to hope for success while I take so little pains? should not I conclude a man ruin'd if he minded his temporal business no more than I do this difficult, this important business of Salvation?

*Of our indifference for
Salvation.*

Our indifference for Salvation is so great, that we must own that of all our affaires we neglect this most and lay it least to heart. Whence proceeds this unaccountable indifference for Eternal happiness? God gave us our lives only to think on it, he judg'd them all little enough to succeed in it; Death for ought we know is very near us; what part of our Life have we spent in this important business? How few years, how few days, nay how few hours have we devoted to it? Have we the confidence to reckon those we spend in the Church with so much distraction and voluntary

irreverence? Alas! have we made any great progress in those hours? Can we have the face to mention the little time we have given to hasty prayers without Devotion, to Confessions without sorrow and without Reformation, to Communions without fruit, or to a few pretended good works which we have lost by doing them upon natural, or which were corrupted by bad motives?

We are so taken up with superfluous cares and worldly business that we can spare but a little Time to think of our Salvation, and we grudge the little time we spend in thinking of it. What reason can we give for such an unreasonable conduct? unless we will own that it proceeds from want of Faith. If we believ'd that the enjoyment of God, that an Eternity of infinite happiness, or misery (which includes & surpasses all other miseries) depended on our diligence; if we did really believe what we repeat so often, that we can not serve God and the world at once, that time is

short, and that Death approaches; that each moment for ought we know may be our last; if we did indeed believe that Salvation is our own work and that we onely can secure it that it is no matter what becomes of us here if we make sure of heaven, that we loose all even temporal blessings by neglecting our Souls, and that if we be truly careful of them we shall loose nothing not even worldly goods; if we do seriously believe these things, how can we be careful, how can we be solicitous for any thing but Salvation?

Of the false pretences of worldly men about Salvation.

'Tis very surprizing that men of Sense and wisdom who reason so well about every thing else, should reason so very falsely when they are desired to think on and work out their Salvation: they freely own that it is hard to secure it in the world, they will make lively and pathetical descriptions of the Cor-

ruptions of the Age, they are very eloquent on the inevitable dangers to which men are expos'd in the world, and they readily conclude that they who live in it stand in as much need of an Heroik virtue as the Religious in their Convents; but when they are told that in order to Salvation it is necessary for them to overcome themselves to mortify their passions, to follow the example of Christ and his Saints they pretend that these vertues do not belong to them, that 'tis not their business, that their condition do's not oblige them to so great a Sacrifice, and that none but Religious can live regular, and conformably to the maxims of Jesus-Christ. Is it not natural to conclude from hence that either the work of Salvation is not a secular Christians business, (which is a most gross and damnable error,) or else that Secular Christians do indeed renounce their Salvation?

*Of the Facility of Salvation
Of the ill use of the means
Salvation.*

God could have put us under a necessity of seeking him continually as our ultimate End and of never departing from him, but he must then have taken away our Liberty; when we reflect on the vast number of Christians who loose their Souls, we are ready to wish that he had subject'd us to that happy necessity of working out our Salvation; that so we might not be tormented with the fear of Hell. But could we desire him to secure our Salvation better than by putting into our own hands? And because he has made me master of my destiny, of my eternal happiness, shall I therefore be unhappy? Shall this render my Salvation doubtful? shall this put me in greater danger? I might have reason to be afraid if it depended on another tho my best friend, but it depends only on me by the help of grace which will never be

wanting to me; yet this is the chief cause of my ruine. O my God! if I do not secure my Salvation, now that thou hast made me master of it, I must own that I deserve judgment without mercy, & nothing less than an Eternal punishment.

*Of the ill use of the means
of Salvation.*

Can we think of our unprofitableness under such powerful means, of our slighting so many graces, and rendring them useles to us, without apprehending least God should say to us as the *Apostle* to the *Iews*, *the Word of God was first spoken to you?* You were born in the bosom of the Church, you were transplanted into the fertile field of Religion, into a ground cultivated by the Labours and water'd with the sweat and blood of him who is both God and man. How many means and helps have we had to enable us to fulfill all the duty's of our Station, and to make

Vobis en-
porrebat pri-
mum loqui
verbum Dei.
Act. 13. 46.

us fruitfull in good works ? but since these means and assistances which were so proper to have made us bring forth an hundred fold, have been useles to us ; have we not reason to fear least he should add, But seeing you put that divine word from you, & judge your selves unworthy of everlasting Life behold we turn to the Gentiles : This sentence is already executed on Syria and on a'most all the East, where Christianity first began, and a great part of the North, particularly unhappy England ; those nations formerly such good Christians and who reckon among their Ancestors so many great Saints, have in these latter times cut themselves off from the fold of Christ, while the Indians and people of Iapan and many other barbarous nations are enter'd into the Church, and have reviv'd the primitive fervour & piety, equalling the generosity of the most glorious Martyrs.

Sed quoniam repellitis illud, & indignos vos iudicatis eternam vitam, ecce convertimini a Gentibus. 8. 45.

Of want of Faith.

Whence comes it that we make no difficulty of believing the mystery's of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, &c. tho they are not only above our understandings but seem to shock our Reason ? Is it not because these mystery's do not contradict our passions ? but do we believe with the same facility the other truths of the Gospel, the Doctrines of selfdenyal, of contempt of the world, of love of poverty and humiliation ? Yet my God ! they are all grounded upon the same infallible Authority, thy holy word : for 'tis as certain that we shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven if we do not deny our selves, subdue our passions, and love our Enemy's ; as it is that we shall never enter there if we are not baptis'd : Yet we rely very much on our faith, for every man pretends to be one of the faithful, not considering that we have but a dead Faith ; and that we confound

the knowledge of what we ought to believe with that true Christian Faith which is allway's fruitful in good works, and without which there is no virtue.

Of the thoughts Hell,

We believe that there is an Hell of fire and dreadful torments: and that one mortall sin is sufficient to condemn a soul to Eternal pains; and yet are we much afraid of mortal Sin? do we not fear Eternal flames and torment? Our trembling at the thoughts of Hell shews we believe it, If the thoughts of its pains be so terrible, what will it be to feel them all? how great will our despair and anguish be when we call to mind that we would not avoid that Hell at the thoughts of which we have so often trembled?

Of a miserable Eternity.

We talk very much of an unhappy Eternity, but do we know what it is? by often speaking of it

we use our selves to the thoughts, and so come to be very little affected with it? A man that is accustomed to that continual vicissitude of seasons, of years, of months, and days, amus'd by its variety and diverted by its novelty finds himselfe in Eternity before he is aware; and in that instant the Soul enters into an unchangable state, it is in the same condition and in the same place where it shall remain to all Eternity: from that first moment it suffers the same Eternal torments which it shall alwayes suffer, so that every minute it suffers an Eternity.

In this wretched Eternity all the different parcels of Time concur and unite as in one point to make the damn'd miserable; 'tis a globe of an infinite weight which bears on an indivisible point? 'tis a duration without end; here these unhappy creatures suffer all the torments which the omnipotence of God can inflict, they suffer them all at once without any intermission, and they suffer them all perpetually without

ny hope of ease, without any hope that their torments shall ever end, or they grow less sensible of them. My God how dread full is this! If these pains were to end after as many millions of ages as there have pass'd moments since the Creation of the world, if every sinful thought were to be punish'd only with an hundred millions of ages in Hell, and a momentary act of Sin with a thousand times as many, the sinners madness would be more tolerable tho incapable of excuse; tho they lasted long, they would at length have an end; but to be everlasting; to be allways suffering and burning, & certain to suffer and burn for ever without any diminution; my God! what excess of misery!

Suppose a Soul condemn'd to the flames of Hell till he had fill'd this Chamber with tears, at the rate of one tear in a thousand years, what a terrible extent of time must he suffer? Cain has not yet shed above five or six but how much more is requir'd to fill the house? yet more

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to make several great Rivers, yet more to fill the sea, and infinitely more to drown the whole Universe, & fill the space between Heaven and Earth: Our imaginations are confounded and lost in such a vast duration; the thought stuns us; yet alas! this though so terrible & inconceivable is not Eternity; it is not so much as a part of Eternity; for after all this Time is past Eternity will be still entire; And a time will come when every damn'd soul shall be able to say that he might have fill'd & drown'd the whole universe by shedding one tear for every thousand years that he has been in Hell, and yet he is still to undergo a whole Eternity of sufferings; that dismall Eternity is not yet diminish'd one moment. Can we yet find satisfaction in unlawful pleasures? Can we delight to sin? can Sin have any charms for us?

My Gracious God! My good Master! my loving Saviour! do not damn me, or rather do not suffer me to damn my selfe; for I know thou wilt not condemn me till I have

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by my repeated infidelity's and Sins renounc'd my title to Eternal happiness. Am I worthy to be the object of thy incensed wrath, of so long and so severe a vengeance? O my soul! arise and work, do all that is required of thee to be saved; while it is in thy power save thy self tho all the rest of the world perish: this is a terrible truth but it is a certain truth. We can never comprehend this Eternity of torments, but we can much less comprehend how a Sinner can believe it & yet live in Sin. Are we afraid to think of Hell? 'Tis true the thoughts of it have made the stoutest tremble, and the greatest Saints quake; but will our not thinking of it take it away, or render it less terrible? will our not thinking of it make us have less reason to fear damnation?

The Fire of Hell is indeed dread full; yet an eminent servant of God observes, that it is slight in comparison of the stings of Conscience, of the remembrance of what is past, and of the time they have mis-

pent; their thoughts will be Eternally taken up with lively Ideas of the vanity of all those things which drew them away from God, & they will incessantly call to mind, how easily they might have been saved, how easily they might have confess'd such a sin, & have avoided such an occasion of falling. How many years of health did I enjoy after my fall? Why did I deferr my Conversion to a death Bed? where was all the wisdom for which I valued my selfe so much? I who was thought a judicious man & capable of advising others well: I needed onely to have done what such and such have done; it depended only on me; I often design'd & resolv'd to do it. but I have not done it. Oh! that I had made these reflections while I might have been the better for them: Alas! I did make them, but unprofitably; I might have been a Saint if I would. I would not and am therefore justly damn'd.

*Of the pretended Conversion of the
Imperfect.*

Men consecrated to the service of God are often very little touch'd with discourses of the necessity of being converted without delay: because they look upon themselves as perfectly converted ever since they contracted at their entrance into Religion, a greater obligation to be thorowly converted; but they do not consider that it is easier to change their state than their manners; that a new sort of dress is not capable of subduing their passions, nor of extirpating their vitious inclinations; this new form of Life, this outward change dazles them at first, their passions are charm'd by its novelty, the grace of God which always abounds at such a time excites some good desires in the most imperfect, in those happy beginnings every thing seems easy to them; but it is this that so often deceives beginners; they take the common effects of change and novelty for the

effects of grace they are so satisfy'd with their imaginary progress in the beginning that they persuade themselves the work is done, that they have nothing to fear, and thus they lull themselves in a false security, but when custom has inur'd them to this new course of Life, when the charms of novelty are over, then their passions revive with greater strength, and are so much the more violent in that they find nothing to amuse them, and that they have layn still and have been curb'd so long: then their first inclinations return, their natural temper gets the upperhand, & they being careless and secure it is easy to imagine the ravage which such dangerous enemys make in a soul that is not upon its guard. And this is the cause that so many Religious are found more unmortify'd, more greedy of pleasures, more fond of honours, less sensible of the eternal truths of our Religion, less faithful to the Grace of God, and much more imperfect; after three or four

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years, than they were the first day
of their Conversion.

*Of the false Idea which many
frame to themselves
of Virtue.*

There is certainly some virtue among the greatest part of Christians, but it is very much degenerated from the virtue of the first Ages of the Church; it is a pliable complaisant virtue; it has so much of God as serves to gain a reputation & to make its self esteemed; it allway's finds out a medium between the maxims of Christ, and those of the world, and therefore it is positively condemn'd by Jesus-Christ and hath nothing but the name of virtue. My God! these half Christians are very unhappy, while they endeavour to please both God and the world, they never please men and alwayes displease God. Their maxim is that we must be well bred, that we must have an easy indulgent virtue; which agrees with what

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they call good sence, as if the spirit and maxims of Christ were contrary to good sence. My God! how directly opposite is this pretended virtue to the Gospel? and what abundance of souls do's it ruine? Who persuade themselves that they need not be so recollected, so exact, so modest, that they are men and must live like men while they converse with them; Yes; you are men but remember you are Christians, Church men, or Religious.

*Of the little progress we make
in Virtue.*

We should be very much asham'd to own our selves or to be thought as ignorant after ten & twenty years study of the sciences, as we were the first half year; and much more asham'd to have it thought that we are contented to be so. And yet how many who make profession of piety, whose great business it is to be come perfect, are not asham'd to confess, & to have it believed, that they would think themselves happy.

if after as many years study in the sublime science of Salvation, they were but as fervent as mortified and as near being Saints, as when they were but six months converted? they do indeed strive to banish those thoughts by giving themselves up to the insipid pleasures of a careless Life, but sooner or later Death will come, and what will their thoughts be then?

Of the proper Virtues for every condition.

It would be a great imprudence & a dangerous error in Directors to exhort all the world alike to the same degree of Perfection, and to conduct them by the same methods: there are *many mansions*, many places, & divers orders in the Kingdom of God, and tho all the inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem are fully content and perfectly happy, yet they possess different degrees of Glory; There are Seraphims and Angels, and they who are not worthy of the same Rank.

Mansiones
multæ sunt in
regno Patris
mei.
Joan. 12. 4.

with the Apostles, the Martyrs, and the Virgins, may have a blessed place among the Penitents. As all do not receive the same measure of grace in this Life, so neither do they receive the same weight of glory in the next; But it is no less dangerous under this pretence to confine our desires and designs within the narrow bounds of an ordinary virtue, when perhaps we have been favoured with extraordinary graces, and are called to a state which requires great perfection. Tis true, all can not be equally perfect, but all are called to be Saints, & he that would be a Saint must acquire & practise every virtue proper to his Station: the same perfection is not requir'd of all in the same Station; but the more perfect our state is, the greater perfection is requir'd of us; that virtue which may be sufficient for a Layman is not sufficient for a Religious, they who are called to Apostolical functions are indispensably oblig'd to a more sublime virtue; and God requires.

Divisiones
gratiarum
sunt.
1. Cor. 12. 4.

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a greater Sanctity in Priests than in
those who are not ordain'd.

Of the World.

Worldly men render themselves objects of pity when they endeavour to persuade us that they are happy; tho they should always dissemble their vexations and discontents, yet no man who knows of what sort of people the world is compos'd, and what it requires of those that serve it, can believe a worldling happy. It is compos'd of men who love nothing but themselves, who think no Law so inviolable as their own interests, & pleasures; 'tis a confus'd medly of people of different characters & inclinations; where each man full of himselfe is contented only with what he likes, and likes onely what pleases him: One (says an holy man) is pufft up with a vain title which he dishonours by his actions, another is proud of his rich cloth's which are yet unpaid; this man values

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himselfe upon anothers merit, that man frets and pines away with vexation because the world has not as good an opinion of him as he has of himselfe; others break their rest to heap up Riches of which they have no need, of which after wards they make no use. When they have ruin'd their health to yet an Estate, they spend this Estate to recover their health; they must be always on the watch against envy and jealousy, against the surprises of this Competitor & the other Enemy; they suspect all the world, and indeed there are but few real friends to be found in it.

What abundance of pains are daily lost in serving the world? When you have labour'd with all the earnestness and diligence imaginable in its service, if you are unsuccessful it gives you no thanks, you loose its favour, you shall be whole years unfortunate without knowing it, and upon the first appearance of a fault it decry's and disgraces you, and values you no more. It is not

sufficient to serve diligently and well, unless you have found the secret to please which frequently do's not depend on us; nay, which is yet more strange, they who would not displease the world must not seem desirous to please; if it once discovers that they have that design, it thinks it selfe exempt from all obligation: it neither rewards the services of those who are not zealous enough for it interest, nor the care and pains of those who make it their whole business to gain its favour.

Do you rely upon your friends in the world? while you are powerfull and in a capacity of obliging many, you will never want a great number of friends, but the moment you fall into disgrace, the moment you are no longer capable of serving them, those pretended friends all disapear and apply themselves onely to him that succeeds you: and tho you were never so much a slave to a great man, he thinks it a sufficient reward for all your services to send

some footman to enquire how you do when you are on your Death-bed.

How desirous are we to be taken notice of? but how can we expect to distinguish our selves among such a multitude of pretenders, who all think themselves endow'd with some excellent quality, with some extraordinary merit: what is this admiration of which we are so fond? (saith the holy man before cited) do you know that wise men admire no thing? that weak men don't admire what deserves it most, because it is above their reach, and they are incapable of judging? those qualitis which you think deserve most admiration seem very indifferent to others; they have as great an opinion of their own wisdom, virtue, and capacity as we have of ours; we think they are partial to themselves, and they judge the same of us.

Yet the world is some times very free of its praises, because it sees every body desirous of them; but if we reflect a little we shall find that

those great marks of esteem, those extraordinary praises, are the very same words of course, which we use every day to those whom we esteem least, have we not observ'd that they who are most lavish of their praises to a mans face, are the first that speak ill of him when they are at Liberty to vent their thoughts. Can we have so little sence as to imagine that we are the only persons to whom men speak sincerely, and that altho they praise all the rest of the world, either out of rallery, or at best out of civility & custom, yet they are in earnest when they praise us? Many believe that all the world admires them when indeed all the world pitys them. They persuade themselves that all their actions are taken notice of to their advantage, because they do not consider that every mans thoughts are taken up with himselfe, & that he whom they think their admirer, fancy's that they admire him.

Add to these the many cruel troubles and vexations which men feel continually, but are forc'd to

dissemble; how often in order to keep up their reputation are they oblig'd to spend more than their revenue? how often do they find their fortunes decaying, & yet dare not moderate their expence? They are forc'd to laugh when their hearts are ready to break: the whole world is nothing but outside and grimace, and he passes for the happiest man who can dissemble his griefs best.

'Tis the desire of Liberty that ordinarily engages men in the world; but can men be in a greater subjection, & a more absolute dependence? not only in the army, but in business, in every profession, we are continually subject to the humours & will of others.

Certainly a worldling is the uneasiest man living, but it is his own fault; he may render his troubles meritorious if he will; he need not suffer so much to be a great Saint, if he would but suffer for God; Yes my God! the greatest part of Christians would think thy yoke insupportable, if they were

bound to do half so much to please thee as the world exacts of them; they are certainly in the wrong not to make use of those plentiful means of sanctification which they all have, they need not go out of their own Station to find opportunity's of meriting very much. They are incessantly complaining of the Vanity of the world, yet they are every moment engaging themselves farther among those vanity's, and grow every hour fonder of them.

*Of the Confidence we ought to
have in the merits
of Christ.*

The consideration that the merits and satisfaction of Christ belong to us is a solid ground of Confidence; Let our wounds be never so dangerous we have a certain cure for them; tho we were more in debt to the Divine justice than we are, tho our debts be never so great, we are in a condition to pay them all, for we find in the merits of Christ &

in his precious blood, a treasure that infinitely surpasses them; he had no need of them for himselfe, he hath bestow'd them on us, so that though we should have been so unhappy as to have committed the most heinous crimes, tho we saw the most terrible effects of the divine wrath ready to fall on us, if we can but make one single act of true reliance on the satisfaction of Jesus, & offer it up to thee my God, we shall no longer need to fear our own sins, nor thy wrath, being shelter'd from them by our Saviours Cross, & wash'd with his precious blood, the merits of which he is pleas'd to apply to us.

*Of our indifference to please
God.*

When we value any ones friendship we endeavour (says an eminent Servant of God) to acquire & preserve our selves in his favour, by a thousand Services by shewing all the respect and zeal imaginable even in things to which our duty

do's not absolutely oblige us, & by avoiding every thing which may in the least displease him. The fear of punishment keeps us from attempting the Life of the man we hate, we do neither good nor harm to those whom we think below our notice; but when we deliberately & frequently affront a man 'tis an evident sign that we neither value his Love nor fear his hatred; and if we do not offer him the highest injury 'tis not because we care for his aversion, but because we fear his power. They who abstain only from great sins and allow themselves a Liberty in every thing else, have reason to fear that charity is absolutely extinguish'd in their hearts: and if they will examine themselves they shall find that it is only the apprehension of the severity with which God punishes heinous sins that keeps them from committing them: they would willingly displease him if the sight of Hell did not stop them, they wish with all their hearts they might sin without punishment. This is a fearfull disposition, yet

it is the disposition of those who indulge themselves in deliberate Venial Sins: God hath no share in the motives that make them abstain from great Crimes, and therefore he is not obliged to assist them; which renders it exceeding difficult for a man who desires to avoid only mortal Sins, to be long free from them.

Of Confession.

The Sacrament of Penance is an easy and efficacious remedy for all the diseases of the Soul, and a certain means to obtain the pardon of all our Sins; nothing is more easy than to declare all our Sins to a Priest who represents Christ, with a true and sincere sorrow for having offended our good & gracious God who has lov'd us so well. To what purpose do we confess our Sins if we are not sorry for them and resolv'd to Sin no more? As it is easy, so it is efficacious because all the merits of the Son of God are apply'd to us by this Sacrament. But whence

is it that we receive no more benefit by this Divine remedy? Never were confessions more frequent, never was there less amendment, custom brings us to Confession, and custom makes us return to the Sins we have confess'd, as if we had no other design in frequenting the Sacrament, but to grow familiar with our Sins. If our confessions be insincere we seem to have a design of rendring our selves more criminal by our confessions: we want contrition, we content our selves with a slight & superficial Sorrow, especially when our interest invites us to continue in our Sins, or when we fancy they are common & small ones; we want resolution and vigorous purposes of amendment; we content our selves with designing to commit the same sins no more, but we will not avoid the occasions that have made us fall. Which is a clear proof that our contrition is not sincere: are we ignorant that the want of contrition is a grievous sin? or if we do know it, and pretend to strive to

raise it in our Souls, it is much to be fear'd that the Confessions of many are null for all that? because the motive of this pretended Contrition is often onely the fear of being guilty of Sacrilege, and hence it is that as soon as our Confession is over, and we are no longer in danger of committing Sacrilege, we relapse again into the same faults as if we had never confess'd them: A man of sense who has seriously weigh'd the Reasons on both sides, is not easily persuaded to change his design; and can we imagine that our frequent falls were preceded by a sincere resolution to sin no more? had we no motives to make that resolution? If God was indeed our motive, why did we so soon change our minds? Did we take that generous resolution upon weak motives? Since our motive subsists still why do we not continue in the same design? We ought certainly to make but very little account of those confessions that are not followed with amendment. My God! how will the remembrance of such confessions

trouble and torment us when we come to dye? One visible mark of true contrition is, when we hate the occasions of Sin as much as Sin it selfe, when we do indeed abhorre the smallest Sins.

Of Private Friendships.

Basil in
Const. Mo-
nast. ca. 30.

Serm. de in-
fir. Monach.

Saint Basile teaches us that there should be a perfect union between all the Religious of the same Community, but no particular Friendships; tho such private engagements may seem very iunocent, they are a for mall separation from all the rest of the body; who loves one of his Brethren more than the rest shews by that preference that he do's not love the others perfectly, and thereby he offends and wrongs the whole Community; These private unions (adds the same Saint) are a continual Seed of Discord, of envy & suspicions, of distrust and hatred; they give occasion to divisions, to secret meetings & cabals which are the ruine of Religion: In those meetings, one discovers his designs, another vents his rash judgments,

a third complains, & a fourth reveals what he ought to keep secret; hence proceed murmurings and backbitings, uncharitable censures and undutifull reflections, upon Superiours, and by an unhappy contagion these ill dispositions communicate themselves from one to another; and indeed the Devil has no temptation more dangerous, and more capable of perverting the most fervent, especially young men, than these particular friendships. As soon as one of these friends is vex'd and thinks himselfe ill us'd, all the rest share in his discontent; he gives his passion vent and they approve it either out of complaisance or a turbulent humour. By this means they break their Rules, & to shew their friendship act contrary to their duty: If such engagements were onely between the most virtuous, yet they ought not to be suffer'd because they are particular. But they are seldom found among the truly virtuous, they are too opposite to real piety, and are almost peculiar to the imperfect. Observe a careless lazy Re-

Familiari-
tates aut col-
loquia ejus-
modi haud
exiguam de-
trimentum
pariunt ani-
mæ. S. Ephr.
11.

ligious. you will soon find him seeking some particular Friendship contrary to the true spirit of charity and Religion. *Saint Ephrem* tells us that *those unions and private conferences are very prejudicial to the Soul* & are great obstacles to true Piety; they destroy insensibly the spirit of Devotion, and make the Soul weary of pious conversation; they inspire a secret aversion for the fervent, and render their very presence uneasy; 'tis in these particular friendships that the best resolutions miscarry, in these the noblest sentiments which the Soul had entertain'd in prayer, at the Communion, & at Mass are lost: in these all the charitable remonstrances of superiours, & the saving counsells of Directors are rendred useles, either by turning them into raillery, or by advancing maxims directly contrary to the spirit of Jesus-Christ. There are few virtues proof against these occasions; Alas! how many who had begun well have split upon this Rock, and been at last miserably ruin'd by these dangerous

dangerous engagements with their false Friends? Therefore this Saint advises carefully to avoid such particular friendships, to lay this down as a principle that in Religion we must have no such intimacy with any; Our friendships must be only spiritual, not built like those friendships upon flesh & blood or any other humane considerations, but founded only on God.

Of the happiness of a Religious Life.

How great is your Satisfaction O Religious Souls, if you have given your selves without any reserve to Christ, you must be very unhappy if you, be not content with so good a master. Every step you make in weaning your hearts from worldly objects that you may fix them more absolutely on him, will be an addition to your happiness. All you have to fear is least some part of your joy should proceed from that natural peace & tranquility which a Life undisturb'd with cares

and noise affords; for then it would be a false joy: you must seek the Cross, you must choose and love that Cross which is most uneasy to you, and most thwarts your inclinations; you may easily find such a Cross every Day in your convent, you will continually meet with something that contradicts your humour, or displeases your fancy; you ought to be watchful to make good use of these precious opportunities of renouncing your own judgment and will in all things, without this submission your peace is imperfect, and will soon be at an end. 'Tis a solid happiness to live in a Society where such perfect Piety and so much Virtue reigns; tho the truly fervent soul who seeks only God, would not be the worse although there were less Piety in his Community, because he is so taken up with watching over and correcting his own faults that he has no leisure to mind other mens: every thing helps those who have a good intention: the bad examples which corrupt the weak, are so

many incitements to increase his Love to his Redeemer, that he may repair their negligence by his fervour and by an holy fear preserve himselfe from imitating them. Yet it is a great advantage to be surrounded with good examples, to have alwayes those excellent models before our eyes to stir us up to diligence, and to make us ashamed when we begin to languish. We shall alwayes find such examples in numerous convents; but if we have not living examples, let us profit by the dead; to this end it will be very usefull to read frequently and carefully the Lives of those of your order, who by the practise of the duty's of your vocation arriv'd to an eminent degree of Sanctity: but here you must have your superior's leave for you had better do nothing than undertake any thing without their approbation; if they give you leave, you should be careful to observe in your Reading, by what ways and methods those holy Souls arriv'd through the Grace of Christ to such

a degree of perfection ; and you will find that having the same graces you may easily practise the greatest part of what they did. I have but one thing more to add , but it is very essential , and I pray God it may never be out of your thoughts , for I am sure if you observe it , you will find the satisfaction of it all the rest of your Life ; Remember you enter'd into Religion onely to save your Souls , and to prepare for the account you must give to God when he shall think fit to call you ; this ought to be your onely care ; you will be examined how you have kept your vows & observ'd your Rule , be alwayes ready to answer. Let others live as they please , tis none of your business , it is a dangetous temptation to trouble your selves with others mens actions , it is enough for you to know what is requir'd of you , so be perswaded that what ever your Superious command whether you think it reasonable or no , provided it be not sinful is indeed the will of God ; this is as

certain as the presence of Jesus . Christ in the holy Sacrament. For that very thing which you dislike is most infallibly in your circumstances , the means which God judges most proper for your Sanctification : A superior may governe ill , but it is most certain that God governs you well by his means , think seriously of this , for if you do not absolutely lay down this principle , you loose all your Time : A Religious Life is nothing but Obedience : No obedience can be meritorious that is not render'd to God in the person of those whom he has set in his place , and they who dispute , examine and condemn their orders , do not consider God in them. If the spirit of God dwell in us he will give us the simplicity of a little Infant , who thinks every thing good and reasonable , he will inspire us with that celestial prudence which sees God in every thing , which finds him in all persons , even in those who have least virtues , and but few of the natural or supernatural qualities.

which represent him. The greater your parts are the more submissive you ought to be, because there is nothing more reasonable and more advantageous than to be govern'd by God, in what manner or by what person so ever he signify's his will; we can not begin too soon after our entrance into Religion, to love Poverty; we shall find an inexpressible satisfaction to be able to tell our Saviour, my Dear Saviour! I have nothing but thee; I have no affection to any of those things which I have leave to use; if I should find my heart inclin'd to any thing but thy selfe I would keep that thing no longer; My God! what a satisfaction is it to dye with a Crucifix before us, after having liv'd in conformity to a crucify'd Saviour?

*Of the Confidence we ought to have
in Jesus-Christ present in
the Eucharist.*

*It is our want of confidence in
Christ that hinders our profiting by*

his presence in the holy Sacrament, for he do's not dwell among us to no purpose; but our Faith is so weak, and we have recourse to him so very seldom, that it is no wonder if we receive no more of those enlightning Graces and blessings which he communicates to those who seek him as their Master, and who come to him as to the fountain of all Perfection. It is no wonder that the Devil omits no invention to keep Christians from frequent Communion and to disgust them with it, or at least to make them have an indifference for our Saviour in that adorable Sacrament; for he knows that as love for Jesus in that holy Mysterie is the source of all good and of all graces, so the neglect of it is commonly the cause of all the evil that we suffer.

Of true fervour.

*It is much to be fear'd that we
often take the privation of sensible
affections for a want of fervour,
and look upon interior consolations*

O iiij

tions as a mark of it; by which means as soon as we find our selves dry & arid, we loose courage and committ faults which we take no care to correct speedily, & from thence we degenerate into tepidity.

Besides we are apt to imagine that to live as holily as when we were full of devotion we must needs endeavour to recover the same ardor that we have lost; but it is just the contrary; we must begin with humbling and mortifying our selves, as if we were warm'd with sensible Graces; it is not our fervour that renders us humble, charitable, regular, and mortify'd, it is a generous exercise of humility, charity, regularity, and mortification; it is a constant practise of these virtues that makes us fervent as we ought to be: this is a very important lesson which if we would study well, and practise often, we should soon find our selves very much advanc'd in the way of Perfection.

Of Voluntary Poverty.

My God! when shall I be sensible of the happiness of Poverty? when shall I love it as well as thou lovest those who practise it? what will a vow of Poverty avail us if we are continually disturb'd with fears of being reduc'd to want, if we are unwilling to feel what it is to be poor? if we will needs be as sure to want for nothing as the Rich themselves: who would not be poor at such a rate? What merit can we pretend before God from a convenient Poverty? wherein we are often better provided for, than we were before we own'd to be poor; & in which we want for nothing.

Of Aridity in the Exercises of Piety.

We are much in the wrong to disquiet and torment our selves for want of consolations, and tender affections in Prayer; to labour

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 after sensible gusts in receiving ; and
 in other Dutys ; while we neglect
 little faults & small observances,
 and let slip the occasions of denying
 our selves , of subduing our wills,
 of conquering our fear of men , &
 of humbling our selves before the
 world ; if we were wise these things
 would take up all our thoughts,
 and we should not make the least
 step towards pleasing our fancy's in
 spiritual exercises ; indeed 'tis only
 pleasing our fancy's for the true
 way of performing our Devotion
 well , is humbly and patiently to
 suffer that aridity and the depri-
 vation of that pretended fervour
 of which we are naturally so fond,
 and which the true Love of God
 despises and rejects with all its
 force.

*Of the facility with which we
 engage our selves in the
 world.*

We readily confess that they
 whom God calls particularly to his
 service are happy ; that being free

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 from the vexations to which men
 who live in the world are expos'd,
 they enjoy a sweet peace and tran-
 quility of Conscience which is the
 ordinary fruit of virtue : How of-
 ten do the greatest worldlings own
 that a Religious man is happy ? yet
 no sooner do's a young man de-
 sign to quit the world and to em-
 brace this happy state , but he
 meets with a multitude of obstacles
 from his friends and Relations,
 who suggest to him that he ought
 to spend some years in trying the
 truth of his vocation ; they make
 a lively description of what he must
 expect to suffer in the state of Life
 which he designs to follow , and
 they exaggerate all the difficulties of
 it, One would think by their tears
 that he was going to make himsele
 unhappy , or at least to hazard his
 Life and his Soul too. But if he
 has a mind to continue in the world,
 they do not think so many pre-
 cautions necessary , nor do they re-
 quire so much time to resolve; they
 know this vocation is much mo-
 re perilous , yet they do not exact
 O vj

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 so long a tryall; instead of aggravating the difficulties, they study to disguise them, and to palliate those real evils which they cannot hide; with what pleasure do they see an only son of great hopes, engage himself in the world? they never trouble themselves to enquire whether he has thought sufficiently of it; on the contrary, they fear nothing so much as his entertaining the design of leaving it; what can be the cause of this? can Salvation be better secur'd in the world? no certainly; but the true Reason is that Salvation is generally the last thing men think of, when they are deliberating what course of Life to choose.

Of the false Ideas which men have of Holiness.

Tis exceeding strange; every man considers holiness with reference to the Station in which he is not; and but few apply themselves to acquire that holiness which is proper to their own Station; the Poor

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 are taken up with thinking on the opportunities the Rich have to be sav'd; and the rich are persuaded that it is an easy matter to sanctify ones selfe, when one is free from the obstacles that proceed from wealth; the young think no reason so proper to work for Salvation as old Age; Youth say they is a time of pleasure we will think of Salvation another time; And the Aged continually regret the means of Sanctification which they enjoy'd in their youth; and find themselves incapable of many good works which they could have done then. Seculars place holiness in the austerity's peculiar to a Religious Life, and from thence conclude their condition unfit for it; and the Religious often loose courage in the way of perfection which they have chosen because they consider Sanctity only in hair shirts and sackcloth, and in those heroique actions which we admire in the Lives of some great Saints. And thus by framing a false Idea of Holiness the greatest part of Christians are disgusted with it,

and live as if there were no Sanctity proper for their Station. My God ! how many mischiefs proceed from this mistake.

Of the Sanctity proper for every Station.

Every man should examine what Sanctity is requir'd of him in the Station to which God hath called him ; *the Will of God is that we should be Saints* ; but we shall never be Saints if we are not exact in the discharge of those particular duty's which belong to our condition. The virtue requir'd of a General is not proper for a Tradesman ; the duties of a magistrate or of a master of a Family are very different from those which God expects from an Hermite ; that virtue which is proper for Seculars , will not suffice for Religious men ; even their perfection has different degrees, the virtue of a beginner differs exceedingly from that which God exacts from the most perfect , the surest & most efficacious way to be a Saint

Hæc est
voluntas Dei,
Sanctificatio
vestra.
1. Theſſ. 4. 2.

is to seek perfection onely in our Station. It is for this end that the Church sets before us the examples of great Saints of all ages and conditions ; The wise woman whom the Scripture celebrates with so much applause became a Saint in looking after her family ; Saint Louis upon the throne , Saint Isidore at the plough , Saint Elzear at Court , and by the help of that grace which is never wanting to us , every man may if he will , arrive to the perfection of his state and Calling.

Of Small Faults.

He who despiseth little things shall fall by degrees , saith the *Author of Ecclesiasticus* , upon which an eminent servant of God remarks , that the doctrine contain'd in those words is of great importance to all the world , especially to those who aspire to perfection ; for great matters recommend themselves so that we are naturally more careful and exact in them , but little things are easily neglected because we think

Qui spernit
modica paulatim
decidet.
Eccles. 19. 9.

A minimis
incipiunt qui
in maxima
procurrunt, ne-
mo repente
fit summus.

them of no consequence ; but we deceive our selves , the danger is greater than we imagine , it is this negligence in those small things that has hindred so many from becoming eminently virtuous and perfect in their Station *Saint Bernard* observes that *they who commit the most horrid impiety's begin at first with little faults* ; no man is excessively wicked on a sudden ; the diseases of the Soul are like those of the body , contracted by degrees : if a little cold , a light indisposition , had been taken in time when it was so easy to cure it , the dying man had been now in perfect health ; so when you see a servant of God fall into some scandalous Sin , you may be sure (adds that great Saint) that this is not his first fault ; it is rare to see a man who has preserv'd the piety of an innocent Life for a great while together , suddenly committ a grievous Sin , if he had taken a little care at first he might easily have prevented the progress of Sin , but because men despis'd the danger while it is small , be

cause they slight and indulged themselves in little imperfections , hence proceed the terrible falls of those who had liv'd so well before.

The consideration that so many souls are ruin'd by such small beginnings is sufficient to make us wonder and tremble : would to God men were thorowly perswaded of this important Truth on which depends the Salvation, or at least the perfection of the greatest part of mankind. The Devil is too cunning to tempt a servant of God to a violation of essentiall duties at first, he would have but small success if he begun with solliciting a fearful Soul to commit a mortal Sin , and therefore he insinuates himselfe by such small things till he hath got footing before the Soul perceives it: these infidelity's in small things are alwayes punish'd with the loss of some Grace, and by the loss of that Grace it is depriv'd of many others, without which it will certainly yeild to temptations in some occasions. This made *S. Gregory* say that *little faults are in so-*

Greg. 3.
part. ad m.
ral. 34.

me respect more dangerous than great ones : and S. Chrysostom speaks thus on the same subject ; Tho the proposition appear extraordinary and unheard of , yet I am not afraid to tell you that sometimes it seems to me that we ought to take more care of avoiding small than great faults : The enormity of these fills us with horror , but we easily grow familiar with the others because we think them inconsiderable ; And after all this shall we neglect these little faults , of which the Saints were more afraid than of heinous Sins ? says Saint Augustin whether the ship be sunk by the violence of the waves or by the negligence of the Mariners in not pumping out the water that enters at a small leak : and he adds in another place , You are upon your guard against great Sins , but what have you done to preserve your selfe from little ones ? Don't you fear them ? have a care least after having thrown your heavy lading over boord to lighten your Ship . least after having renounc'd every thing that seem'd considerable at your entrance into Reli-

gion , the sand in the Hold sink it , have a care least after having escap'd the violence of the storms in the tempestuous Sea of the world , when you are just ready to enter into the port of Religion , have a care least you perish upon little banks of Sand which seem'd nothing , and which you neglected to shun , The greatest Graces are commonly the fruit of fidelity in little things which is it selfe the effect of a greater degree of Love to God , if we deprive our selves by our coldness and want of care of those extraordinary helps , of those singular favours which inspire so much courage against the strongest Temptations ; & which are so necessary in many cases , how often shall we be in doubt whether we have not consented to temptation ? what a great advantage should we find at such a difficult time in having given our selves wholly to God , and having thereby merited his special and free help , by which we are sure to be enabled to resist all the efforts of the Tempter , and without which we shall not only

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the expos'd to danger, but we shall
perhaps be overcome?

Of Fidelity in little things.

He that is faithful in little things
will be faithfull also in great things,
and indeed none but great Souls ha-
ve this Fidelity. They are indeed
little things in themselves, but it
is no little thing to be faithful to
God in the smallest matter: yet this
fidelity will be worth nothing if
we be negligent in greater things;
but we must own that this Fidelity
in little things is very great & no-
ble; if we love much we shall ne-
glect nothing that we know is plea-
sing to those we love.

God did not choose the stoutest
& boldest Israelites to overcome the
Midianites: one of the greatest vi-
ctories the children of Israel ever
won was gain'd by *three hundred*
men who did not kneel down to drink
in the River. What seems of less
consequence than the holding up
ones hands: Yet the *victory* over the
Amalekites depended so absolutely

In trecentis
viris qui
lambuerunt
aquas libera-
bo vos.
Judic. 7. 7.

Cumque

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on the *lifting up Moyses hands* to
heaven, that *when ever he held them*
down the Enemy prevailed. What do
you mean *Josh* cry'd the Prophet
Elisha to smite the Earth but three
times, if you had smote it five or six
times you should have been master of
all Syria and have utterly destroy'd
your Enemys. How slight was the
ceremony on which depended the ta-
king of *Jericho*, (O what a mock
would our half devotes who des-
pise small things have made of it)
when the walls fell down before the
people of God? In fine 'tis sufficient
that *Jesus-Christ* assures us, that
heaven, eternal hapiness, and God
himselfe is the reward of fidelity in
little things.

levaret Moy-
ses manus
vincebat Is-
rael &c.
Exod. 17. 11.

Si percussis-
ses quinquies
aut sexies
percutisses
Synaim usque
ad consump-
tionem.

4. Reg. 13. 19.
Josh. 6. 18. 19.

Quia super
paucos fuisti
fidelis, intra
in gaudium
Domini tui.
Luc. 22. 28.

*Of the Source of our
Imperfections.*

Though the greatest part of Chri-
stians pretend to aspire to Perfection
yet very few attain it, because they
are not really willing to be perfect;
they readily believe the Doctrines of

the Gospel, & the important maxims upon which all true Piety is grounded, but they are not sincere in the application of them. They do not dispute the necessity of doing violence to our inclinations in order to obtain heaven, but they find out specious Reasons to excuse themselves from that violence in certain occasions which require much pains: they own themselves bound to subdue their passions, & they fight with them, and frequently gain a kind of victory over them, but they do not meddle with their reigning passions, & this is the cause that all their other victory's signify nothing, for they should have begun with this. We must set a continual watch upon our selves and upon every motion of our hearts that we may suppress all our carnal desires, the many almost imperceptible but continual selfish designs, which make us seek only, tho secretly, to advance our interests, & a thousand other insinuations of selfe Love which surprise the most virtuous, & mingling

themselves with their best actions take away all their merit, or at least diminish their Perfection.

Of the false complaisance which we have for others.

True Piety is never incommode, it is full of Charity for all the world; a solidly virtuous man is affable and obliging, never troublesome or uneasy, but allways in good humour, still ready to do service to others, and severe only to himselfe; for the spirit of Christ is a spirit of Peace, & sweetness. This Principle self Love which is ingenious in making advantage of every thing, employs to deceive many who make profession of Piety, by persuading them to draw consequences from it very different from the true spirit of Christ. Under this pretence it would persuade us to please all the world, to displease no not those who do not relish our Saviour maxims; but how can we please him if we pretend not to displease them? From hence proceeds

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 that unhappy, that unworthy complaisance which makes us so often ashamed to take Christs part, & to declare our selves boldly his Disciples, because we would be complaisant and disoblige no body. But where do we find that a punctual observance of our Rule, that modesty, recollection, and purity, and the doing our duty is disobliging? If the imperfect are disoblig'd by these things we can not avoid displeasing them, unless we are willing to betray our Consciences & displease God.

Of Exactness.

We are not afraid of being thought weak or scrupulous, for being very earnest in pursuing our interests, exceeding careful in our wordly affairs, allway's up on the watch to make use of every thing, to let slip no occasion of making our fortunes, on the contrary, it is the way to be esteemed men of sense, able, wise and prudent: but if we apply our selves seriously to the business

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 of Salvation, if we carefully lay hold one very little opportunity of pleasing God and of growing in virtue; If we be exact in discharging all the dutys of our Station and faithfull in the smallest matters, the world calls us weak & scrupulous, it laughs at our care and blames our conduct: They who are most desirous to please God are often less able to support this than any other difficulty in the practise of virtue, they are better proof against any other persecution: My God! if the earnest desire to please thee were condemn'd by the Infidels, 'tis no more than we might expect, but to meet with this difficulty among Christians, among men who profess to be thy servants, this is one can hardly imagine.

Of the Artifices of Self Love.

My God! how much pains would a little sincerity & truth spare those who serve thee? we do not seek God with simplicity enough, we are not entirely willing to please
 p

him, and we alwayes seek our selves, nay too often we seek only our selves, even when we pretend to seek him. My God! where is the danger of giving our selves wholly and entirely to thee, that we take so much time to resolve? Tis self love that spoils all & it is too true that the greatest part of mankind is govern'd only by it. All the difference between ipiritual men and those that are not so is, that self Love is barefac'd in the latter, and less visible & more distinguish'd in the former; and if we would take the pains to reflect on the true motive of the greatest part of those actions which seem least imperfect, we should find an hundred windings and turnings of self Love which renders them all unfruitful.

Of the tender Love of God to those who serve him.

All the Sanctity and perfection of a Christian Life consists according to S. Basil in Looking upon God as the cause of all things & in

conforming our selves entirely to his holy Will. If we were thorowly convinc'd of this important truth, what a real sweetness should we find in a spiritual Life? And what perfect tranquillity should we enjoy being assured that all that happens in the world (except Sin) proceeds from a particular Providence of God who loves us tenderly? All the world ought to have this Confidence in God, but much more Religious men whom he hath adopted in a peculiar manner & whom he hath inspir'd with the Sentiments which dutiful Children should have for their Father. *My Father and my Mother have forsaken me but the Lord hath receiv'd me*, saith the Psalmist; 'tis an advantageous exchange to choose so good a Father in the room of him we have left: so that now we have a right to say with confidence, *the Lord taketh care of me therefore I shall not want; I am poor and needy but the Lord provideth for me*, who can reflect that God himselfe provides for him, that his eternal Providence watches

Ps. 16. 10.

Rodri. Tr. 33
c. 10.

Ps. 22. 12

Ps. 69. 6

over him with the same goodness and care as if he had no other creatures to preserve in the whole world, who can think of this without feeling himselfe transported with joy & love to God? We shall find reason enough to love him and to abandon our selves entirely to him, if we do but reflect on the obligations we have to his fatherly Providence, and on the tender Love he bears us.

► You believe that sickness is the effect of chance: You thought that that humiliation, that mortification proceeded from the passions of men: They may indeed act out of Passion, but do you know that God makes these very passions serve to bring about his designs for your advantage? Men perhaps seek to satisfy their revenge by using you ill, but God permits it only for your good.

When Josephs Brethren sold him into Egypt they follow'd the dictates of their vengeance, and design'd his ruine, but God made their barbarous action a means of Joseph's

Glory? Since we have such powerful motives to excite us to put all our trust in God, why do we rely no more upon him? it is because we are not hearty towards him, we give him what he requires, only by halves, imperfectly and unwillingly; we continually refuse him some part of what he demands, and this is the true reason that our request are accompanied with so many fears & so little Faith.

*How far we are to imitate
Virtuous men.*

Good examples are a great help to us, we may easily be Saints if we converse with Saints; the exercise of virtue is much less difficult in the company of those who truly practise it: but we must have a care of taking any man for our pattern, tho he seem never so virtuous; we must imitate his virtue, but we must still remember that he who is eminently virtuous now may be perverted, and that the most perfect is he that has fewest faults. When we propose to

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 our selves to imitate any man we
 are in danger of imitating his very
 imperfections: Our opinion of his
 virtue makes us copy every thing
 he do's, we follow blindly all his
 examples, & very often we imitate
 his faults more than his virtues.

*Of insensibility proceeding from
 carelessness.*

How can a Religious man who
 lives carelessly or a Priest who is in-
 devout, and who dishonours his sa-
 cred Character by his manners, think
 without trembling on the account
 they must give to God of all the
 graces they have abus'd, of all the
 good which they should have done
 & of which they have render'd
 themselves incapable, & of all the
 means of sanctification of which
 they would make no use? These
 unhappy men are like those who af-
 ter having serv'd God fervently for
 some time, grow careless and weary
 of his service: God usually punis-
 hes their infidelity in this Life, &
 some times without delay by an

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 insensibility which often degenerates
 into hardness of heart; we have a
 terrible example of this insensibility
 in Judas, who had without doubt
 receiv'd singular favours from Je-
 sus-Christ, no sooner was he grown
 careless and had perverted himselfe
 but he fell into a strange insensibi-
 lity which became incurable; he
 could hear his Saviour say the
 most touching things in the world
 without being at all affected, when
 the blessed Jesus press'd his Conver-
 sion in the tenderest and most lo-
 ving as well as most forcible manner,
 when the son of God discover'd the
 wicked intentions of that Traitor
 without naming him, all the rest of
 the Apostles trembled for themsel-
 ves, Judas only to whom he spake
 is unconcern'd: when a soul is in-
 sensible it soon grows impudent;
 Judas has the face to ask if his Ma-
 ster means him: Christ conceals it
 no longer, but this answer which
 should have fill'd him with confu-
 sion makes no impression on his
 hardened heart; he hears coldly that
 terrible threatening from his Saviours

Unus ex
 vobis tradet
 me,
 Marc. 14. 18.

Tu dixisti.
 Matt. 6. 64.

Vx hominū

illi per quem
Filius homi-
nis tradetur.
Mat. 26. 24.

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mouth. Woe to that man by whom
the Son of man shall be betrayed, &
remains insensible; Jesus condescends
to wash his feet, to give himselfe
to him in the communion, to ex-
hort and threaten him, yet nothing
moves him, nothing can stop him,
he goes out and puts his impious
design in execution, and accom-
plishes his black and malicious ingrati-
tude by a treacherous kiss. How
should we tremble at the thought of
this insensibility? It is the most
dreadful of judgments and so much
the more dreadful in that it is not
perceiv'd by those who lye under it?
The surest mark that we are not in
that state is a fear least we should
be in it? nothing is so difficult as
to convert those who are not sen-
sible of their want of Conversion.

Of the thoughts of Death.

The thought of death is a most
powerful argument to convince us
of the vanities of this Life: we shall
easily be disgusted with the empty
pleasures of the world, its imagi-

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nary honors, and its false Riches
for which we weary our selves, if
we seriously reflect where they all
end; in a winding sheet, in a Cof-
fin; in a grave; in worms and
dust, there are the end of all hu-
mane Pride and greatness. Form as
many vast projects as you please,
rely upon your wisdom, friends,
and Riches, you must quit them
all whether you will or no, and
they will all abandon you. Only
thou o God! dost never forsake
those who serve thee, I will there-
fore love and serve thee, & none
but thee.

Of our condescension to the Imperfect.

It is surprizing that men have
so little consideration for fervent
Christians, while they have all the
condescension in the world for the
careless & imperfect. But we do
not see the special hand of provi-
dence who herein favours those
whom he loves most: is a man
truly virtuous? we make no scru-
P y

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 ple of exercising his patience, his desires are frequently cross'd, and he is often forc'd to do what he do's not like, yet at the same time we refuse nothing to the imperfect whether it be that we use them like sick men that are past recovery whom we let have what they please or that God by a terrible judgment lets them alone in this Life, and leaves them to their own imaginations. However hard this distinction seems, it is much for the advantage of those who serve God faithfully, and renders them much more esteem'd by all who judge wisely and who are animated by the Spirit of Jesus-Christ.

*Of natural inclinations
 to Virtue.*

Men of soft and peacable tempers who seem born with a natural propensity to virtue are in great danger of being but indifferently virtuous and of making no progress in the way of perfection if they do not keep a strict watch over all the mo-

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 tions of their hearts; else their natural tranquility will degenerate in to an indolence which is very agreeable to self Love, so that they will take no pains to acquire great virtues and will content themselves with an obscure Life, & with a seeming moderation not founded upon humility but the pure effect of self Love, which is unwilling to take pains and chooses a moderate virtue for fear of meeting with oppositions and sufferings in the pursuit of a more sublime. But alas! they who satisfy themselves with an ordinary virtue will in all probability live and dye destitute of all true virtue.

Of true Zeal.

It is a dangerous fault to be uneasy when others do as many or more good works than we: would to God that all Preachers were eminent and successful; would to God that every Director of souls had the gift of wisdom and discerning of spirits, the zeal and solid piety
 P vj

which are so necessary for all Directors; so God be glorified what matter it whether I or another be the instrument? when the good success of others in the exercise of their Ministry is a real satisfaction to us it is a sure sign that we seek only his Glory.

*Of sincerity in the Service
of God.*

Many desire to be perfect, and from time to time endeavour after it, yet how few attain it? That which hinders the greatest part from advancing in the way of virtue is a want of sincerity in Gods service, some little affections which they do not and will not renounce, 'tis selfe Love disguis'd under the specious names of moderation, goodness, prudence, and civility; in fine it is a certain secret pride which corrupts the greatest part of their best actions. God will be serv'd with a dove like simplicity, with an uprightness of soul that cannot stoop to those little arts of selfe

Love which are so prevalent every where; we seek an easy Director, we torment our brains to forge something like Reasons to excuse ourselves from some duty's which we know in our Consciences God requires of us, but which we find unpleasant, and are unwilling to perform; Do we think to deceive God by these artifices? The number of those who seek God in spirit is very small, who serve him with that true simplicity which is necessary to Perfection; how many instead of endeavouring to please God, Study to persuade themselves that they may please their own Appetites in every thing, without displeasing him? If they make him any little Sacrifice; They presently find out some way to make themselves amends. How come so many Professors of Piety to be so very sensible in the imaginary points of Honour? The tone of a voice, a disobliging word disturbs them, Let them make as much use as they please of the words Modest, and humble, true humility is inseparable.

ble from Patience and sweetness. Many think that they are truly humble because they have a mean opinion of themselves, but they deceive themselves if they are not willing that others should have the same thoughts of them. It is not sufficient to know that we have no true virtue or merit, we must be willing to have others believe it too.

Of submission of our Wills.

It is generally said, and perhaps not without appearance of Reason, that devout men are fond of their own opinions; but it is an error to think that men who will always follow their own Wills, and are obstinately conceited of their own sentiments, can be truly devout. This submission of our Wills is that renouncing of our selves which Jesus-Christ requires so positively, and commands so often in the Gospel, and without which we cannot be his Disciples. And indeed we can never be truly virtuous

Without this submission both of our Understanding and Will.

Of the Love of Christ.

If any thing (says a great servant of God) could shake my faith in the Mystery of the Eucharist, it would not be a doubt of that infinite power which God exerts there: I should sooner stagger at the exceeding Love of Jesus in giving himselfe there to us; for I am not able to comprehend how men can believe that he is present on our Altars, and that they receive him in this adorable Sacrament, And yet be indifferent and cold to him, be forgetful of and disgusted with him.

Who would not expect that such a wonderful Prodigy of Love, should excite, at least, a desire, an earnestness, and exceeding tenderness in the hearts of all men? But Alas! it is just contrary; We act as if we should have lov'd him more, if he had lov'd us less; I tremble, O my God! at the thought of the

indignities and outrages which the impiety of bad Christians, and the fury of Hereticks have offer'd to thee in this August Sacrament; how Sacrilegiously have they profan'd thy Altars, and thy Churches? how impiously and scornfully have they often treated the Body of Christ? Can any Christian call to mind these horrible impiety's without being earnestly desirous to repair by all possible means those barbarous outrages? And how can a Christian live, and not have that desire?

Have I often thought on this? Do I think often on it? I who appear so seldom at the foot of the Altar, and who am so unwilling to spare a little Time to adore my Saviour, a specially at those hours when the Churches are least frequented.

My God! I will think seriously on it for the future, because I will now begin to love thee truly; and certainly it is high time for me to begin: I have made several resolutions to love thee and have broke them all, but I am confident this

will be effectual; Yes my Divine Saviour, I am fully resolv'd to love thee, and to love thee without any reserve: thou hast loved me, and wouldst have me love thee, and therefore I am sure that thou wilt not refuse me thy Grace to enable me to love thee; full of this hope and confidence I am bold to say with thy Holy Apostle, *Who shall separate me from the Love of Christ? I am certain that neither Death nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, neither the sight of things present, nor the prospect of things to come, nor greatness, nor adversity, nor any Creature, shall ever be able to separate me from, or deprive me of the Love of God which is in Jesus-Christ our Lord.*

Quis ergo nos separabit à charitate Christi? Certus sum quia neque mors neque vita, neque Angeli, neque Principatus, neque virtutes, neque instantia, neque futura, neque fortitudo, neque altitudo, neque profundum, neque creatura alia, poterit nos separare à charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu Domino nostro. Rom. 8. 35. 38. 39.

que creatura alia, poterit nos separare à charitate Dei, quæ est in Christo Jesu Domino nostro. Rom. 8. 35. 38. 39.

FINIS.

THE COMPOSER NOT

understanding English, many litteral faults have escap'd correction, which the Reader will easily mend, as also the mistakes in the Stops and points.

Such faults as spoil the sence, are here set down.

P. 5. l. 29. blot out, *not*. p. 17. the last line. r. *of our*. p. 25. l. 11. r. *their vanity*. p. 26. l. 3. & 4. for *at* r. *as*. p. 29. l. 8. blot out, in p. 40. l. 13. r. *like them*. p. 58. l. 15. blot out, *you are put in that dignity*. p. 73. l. 25. after *Salvation*, r. *have we made good use of the general?* p. 80. l. 12. & 13. for, *do compose*. r. *discompose*. p. 97. l. 1. r. *he is like*. p. 98. l. 11. blot out; *not*. p. 112. l. 26. & 27. for *confession*. r. *con-*

version. p. 121. l. 28. for *Hove* r. *Above*. p. 153. l. 18. for *owne*. r. *owe*. p. 171. l. 19. after. *our Wills*. r. *to his*. p. 203. l. 9. for *any*. r. *my*. p. 208. l. 3. for *of*. r. *or*. p. 216. l. 1. for *OCTOBER*. r. *NOVEMBER*. p. 216. l. 3. for *Willingness*. r. *unwillingness*. p. 217. l. 24. for *thare*. r. *share*. p. 227. l. 16. for, *of*. r. *if*. p. 238. l. 6. for. *S. Bonaventure*. r. *Bonaventure*. p. 258. l. 1. r. *Sin hath*. p. 266. l. 22. for. *to*. r. *do*. p. 272. l. 1. for. *thoughts*. r. *tongues*. p. 277. l. 21. for *applicerion*. r. *application*. p. 280. l. 17. for, *erldly*. r. *worldly*. p. 282. l. 2. & 3. blot out, *of the ill use of the means of Salvation*. p. 290. l. 16. for *this*. r. *'tis*. p. 293. l. 9. for. *chamns*. r. *charms*. p. 301. l. 17. for *own'd*. r. *vow'd*? p. 325. l. 7. for. *reason*. r. *season*. l. 8. for, for *Salvation*. r. *out their salvation*. p. 330. l. 16. r. *It matters not say's* S. Augustin, p. 332. l. 1. for *the*. r. *be*. p. 335. l. 23. & 24. for. *to displease*. no. r. *not to displease any man*, no. p. 337. l. 2. for. *one very*. r. *or every*. p. 337. l. 20. after, *is*. r.

What: p. 352. l. 20. for *aspectaly*
r. *especially*.

There are some quotations omitted in the Margin, and divers faults in those that are inserted; it is needless to remark them for those who do not understand Latin: and they who do, know how to correct them.